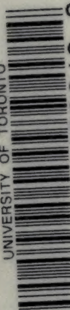
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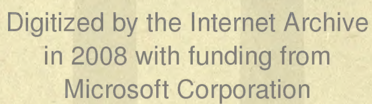
"Age cannot wither her, nor custom stale
Her infinite variety."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THE
LETTERS OF ALCIPHRON

Broadway Translations

ALCIPHRON

LETTERS FROM THE COUNTRY AND THE TOWN

OF FISHERMEN, FARMERS, PARASITES, AND COURTESANS

Translated by

F. A. WRIGHT

With an Introduction and Notes

LONDON
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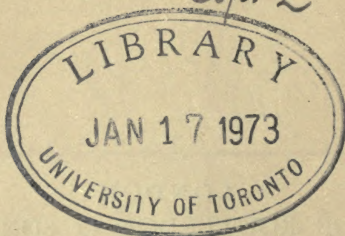

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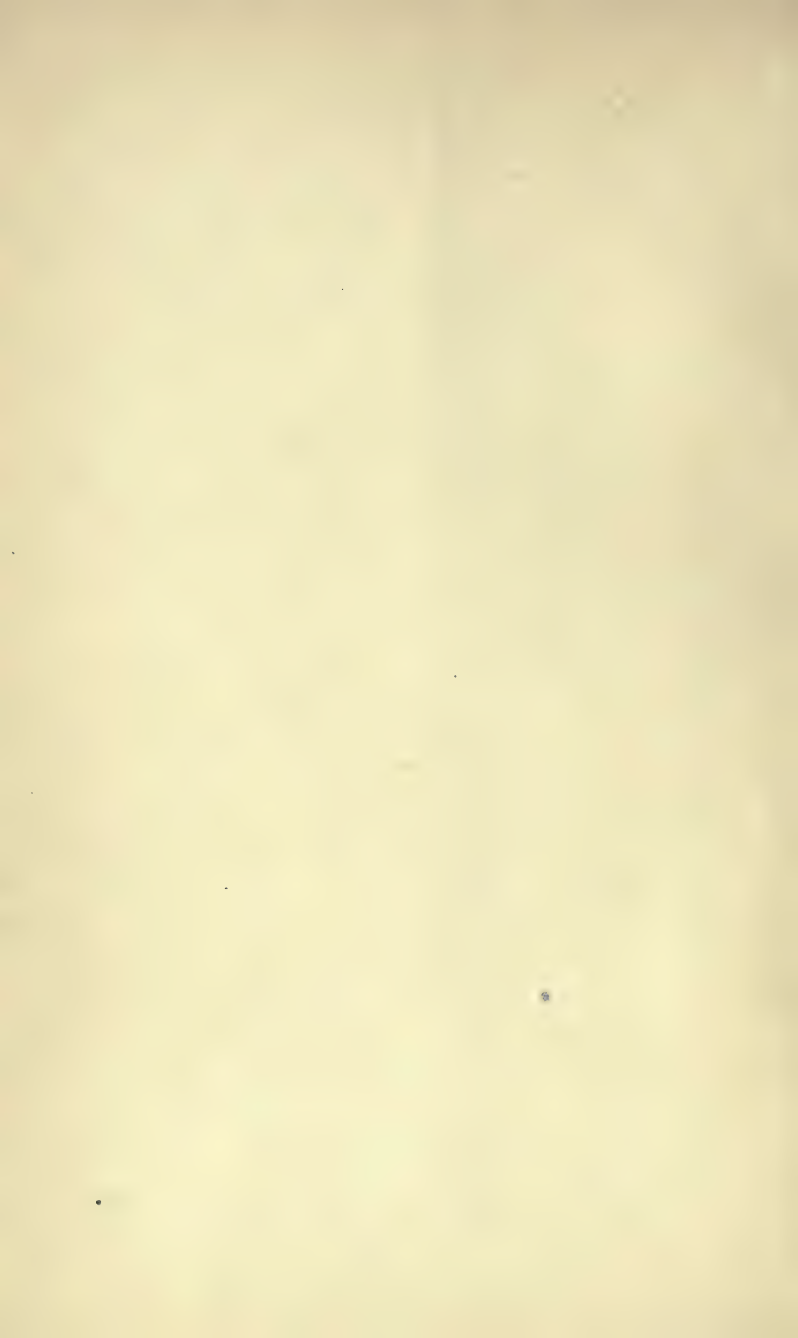

TO

GEORGE STUART ROBERTSON

Do you recall those days afar,
Ere you became The Registrar;
When we together would discuss
Some passage in Timotheus,
And argue who had finer art—
He or Beethoven or Mozart?

Since then we've travelled many a mile,
And both—perhaps—have wiser grown;
But still I hope that you will smile
Over this book of ALCIPHRON.

F. A. W.

By the Same Author

THE ARTS IN GREECE

FEMINISM IN GREEK LITERATURE

THE GIRDLE OF APHRODITE
(*Broadway Translations*)

OVID: THE LOVER'S HANDBOOK
(*Broadway Translations*)

INTRODUCTION

THE BEGINNINGS OF ROMANCE

MODERN literature in all its forms is modelled on some Greek original. Even the novel, the most recent and as is often thought, the least derivative of its developments, cannot escape from this dependence. The prose romance is a Greek invention, the final gift of the Greek genius to the modern world. It is true that in the great age of Greece, romance, as we conceive it, was impossible; but Fortune did not allow the Greeks to perish until the garland was complete, and the novel is the brightest flower that the second blooming of Greek literature under the Roman Empire produced. A full explanation of the reasons why the romance comes thus last in time would involve a long inquiry into the attitude of classical authors towards nature, literary form, and women. Here a brief summary must suffice.

One of the plainest proofs of the romantic spirit in literature is the realization of the intimate harmony that reigns between man and nature. It lifts the lover's pleasures and pains up from this gross worldly sphere and makes him at one with the great scheme of things: love becomes part of nature's mystery. Now in this sense of the mysterious the Athenian

mind was always lacking and so is all literature written under Athenian influence. The Alexandrian poets, and even some of the Romans, possessed the nature sense; Longus depends upon it for his most subtle effects; it has been the glory of our literature from the very beginning and forms the "idée mère" of the Wessex Novels: but in classical Greek it is almost entirely absent, and for the Athenian one of the main elements of romance never came into existence.

The second factor is even more plainly negative. Form in literature to the classical Greeks was a controlling and dominating force. A writer could not alter his form to suit his own caprice, he worked always under definite rules of style which traced back to immemorial antiquity. Poetry was older than prose and a poetical form was binding for all imaginative work. The language and the style appropriate for lyric, epic, and ode were of very varying degrees of complexity and they were fixed beforehand for the poet. The difference between Timotheus and Sappho is not purely one of personal temperament; Timotheus is not elaborate and Sappho simple merely because they wish to be; they both are constrained by the convention of their literary form.

So even the same author in the same composition was often compelled to use a different treatment; the dialogue of tragedy is easier than the chorus, because the music of choral poetry was ruled by a convention extraordinarily subtle and difficult, the music of the spoken word was comparatively simple.

Prose, the later born, was reserved for non-imaginative work which the Greeks regarded as the less valuable. "Poetry"—*i.e.* imaginative literature—says Aristotle, is a more serious and a more educational thing than "History"; the latter merely tells us of particular things that have happened in the past, poetry gives us general truth, things that might happen at any time.

The philosopher would seem to agree with Catherine Morland in *Northanger Abbey*, "History, real solemn history, I cannot be interested in. I read it a little as a duty, but it tells me nothing that does not either vex or weary me. The quarrels of popes and kings, with wars and pestilences, in every page; the men are all so good-for-nothing, and hardly any women at all—it is very tiresome; and yet I often think it odd that it should be so dull, for a great deal of it must be invention, and invention is what delights me in other books."

When Aristotle and Jane Austen are of the one mind it may be presumed that they are right, and certainly a young man will get more knowledge of life from Balzac than from all the historians that have ever written. But in Aristotle's time imaginative writing was restricted to the poetical form. The novel, for reasons which it would be interesting to discuss, requires the medium of prose, and therefore so long as the Greeks adhered to their binding distinction between the functions of prose and verse the novel was impossible. Plato and Xenophon made some attempts in the direction of imaginative prose, but the general rule held even through the whole

of the Alexandrian period: its final overthrow was chiefly Lucian's work.

But although an indifference to the harmonies of nature, and a strict regard to literary conventions, combined together in retarding the coming of romance, yet the main reason for its late appearance is to be found in the attitude of the Athenians towards women, and the dependence of classical Greek literature on Athenian writers.

In Greece, during the great period from the sixth to the fourth century B.C., there were two sharply contrasted systems of life, the Ionian and the Dorian. To the first belong nearly all the authors whom we call classical: the second is almost unrepresented in literature. The Dorian system kept everyone, man and woman alike, under a strict and narrow discipline. The Ionians conceived the idea of absolute liberty for men, while they reduced women to a condition closely akin to slavery. For them woman was not a companion, whose love should be won and kept by constant wooing: she was a servant whose embraces were a matter of duty, a creature necessary for the preservation of the species, but devoid of all romantic charm. This was their usual conception of women, and on this conception their social life was built. The historians and the orators of Athens, all in varying degrees, yield to the influence of environment and are inclined to class women and slaves together as things meant by nature for the gratification of the free male: the moral aspects of slavery and feminism pass almost unnoticed.

Socrates and his circle stand almost alone in

realizing the fatal mischief which the degradation of women caused in Athens, and Plato and Euripides did their utmost to show the folly of supposing women as a class to be naturally inferior to men. But still neither the philosopher nor the dramatist apparently ever imagined the possibility of romantic affection between the two sexes. Euripides cannot conceive of any relation between man and woman except one based solely on sexual passion. Plato, who has far more of the romantic spirit in him, diverts his nobler love to his boy friends. The two epigrams to Aster, cut off from life in early youth, are inspired by the very essence of romantic love; for they transfer to nature the emotions excited by the beloved. But although Plato admitted women into the inner fellowship of the Academy, we have no record of any but intellectual comradeship between the philosopher and womankind.

Xenophon alone makes some tentative steps in the direction of the novel with romantic love as its theme: his "Education of Cyrus" is almost the first example of imaginative prose, and although it is hopelessly overweighted with political doctrine, some of its episodes approach nearly to romance. For example the story of Abradatas and his faithful wife Panthea, "the fairest of all the women of Asia," in most respects corresponds to a true definition. It is an imaginative love story in prose: the elements of danger and hope are present, together with the victory of the weaker: it only requires a little more elaborate setting and a little less obvious moral purpose.

The plot run thus:—Panthea, the wife of the Assyrian Abradatas, is taken prisoner by Cyrus: the conqueror respects his captive's virtue and commits her to the care of his young lieutenant Araspes. The latter, who had at first despised the power of love, becomes enamoured of the fair Assyrian and attempts, at first by persuasion, and then by threats, to win her embraces. Panthea reluctantly informs Cyrus of the insult: Araspes is sent away and Abradatas, on receiving a letter from his wife, surrenders as a vassal to Cyrus. Fighting for his new lord he is killed in battle and Panthea, like Evadne, commits suicide over his body.

As a picture of wifely virtue and devotion the story is perfect and makes an admirable pendant to that other account of a happy household, Ischomachus and his young wife, in the *Oeconomicus*. But Xenophon is an exception in Athenian literature: his ideas of women are altogether different from those of most of his countrymen, and he preferred a voluntary exile to existence in his native state. That women should be the object of romantic affection seemed even to the noblest and wisest of Athenians an impossible thing, and the feminist doctrines of the Socratic circle had little effect on the actual conditions of Athenian life.

So much then for the Greeks of the classical age and their reaction to romantic ideas. Perhaps now it will be well to consider more closely what exactly we mean by romance in literature.

A definition of romance, as Mr George Wyndham says, would be easy if there were general agreement

on the meaning of the word. Unfortunately there is not. Most people if asked, "What is Romance?" would answer, as Augustine did of Time—"I know when you do not ask me." A definition of the novel is a more simple task. We may call it, with the English eighteenth-century master—"a large and diffused picture, comprehending the characters of life, disposed in groups." Or, we may follow the French critic—"a reflection of a corner of the world seen through a temperament." Perhaps the main difference between a novel and a romance is that the interest of the latter depends eventually on the mystery of sex. That mingled sense of attraction and repulsion, idealized by emotion and kept, as far as may be, free from all gross elements is the foundation of romance. Bishop Huet gave the essentials when he said of the French "roman" that it is "une histoire feinte d'aventures amoureuses, écrite en prose avec art pour le plaisir de lecteurs"; and Dr Johnson follows him in his blunt description—"a novel is a short tale of adventures, mostly dealing with love." It is true that the worthy Dunlop in his *History of Prose Fiction* declares that "the species of machinery, such as giants, dragons, and enchanted castles, which forms the seasoning of the adventures of chivalry, has been distinguished by the name of Romantic Fiction"; but nothing of all this is really necessary. Giants, dragons, and enchantments are mere accidents; they were for a time fashionable symbols for the root ideas of passion and peril from which romance springs; but they were only a fashion, and their presence or absence has no effect on a true classification.

The divorce between romance and reality is arbitrary, and two, at least, of the definitions in the Oxford Dictionary—"a fictitious narrative in prose of which the scenes and incidents are very remote from those of ordinary life" and—"an extravagant fiction, a wild and wanton exaggeration, a picturesque falsehood" mark only perverted uses of the word.

Mr Wyndham proposed—"Romance is the recognition and the welcoming of the strange": a more recent critic is nearer the mark, when he describes romance as that mood in literature which combines to the keenest extent the idea of danger and the idea of hope. It differs from tragedy, in that it has from the very beginning the idea of hope; it differs from comedy in that it has from the beginning the idea of danger. There must be courage in it but not the courage of mere fortitude nor of mere confidence. It depends in fact upon our peculiar English virtue of cheerful boldness, a virtue which, whether we are dealing with war or with women, is apt to prove invincible.

Romance then is the literature of unexpected victory: it is one of the products of the revolution brought about by Christianity in the position of women, and its main theme is the delight that comes from the unexpected sight of the weak subduing the strong. That is perhaps one reason why the romantic novel, from its first beginning with Longus, so generally concludes with a marriage. The ceremony is a triumph of convention over nature, of the subject over the master, of woman over man. The three statements may be inverted according to

the point of view; but the fact still remains true, it is a triumph of the weak over the strong. "A fighting chance"—that is a definition of marriage and it is also the best definition of romance.

Now of romance in this sense there is very little trace in the classical literature of Greece and Rome. Indeed the word "romance" in its origin is a protest against the ideas that are embodied in classical Latin. The mediæval stories of chivalrous adventure were called romances because they were written in the romance vernacular—Italian, French, or Spanish—and not in the Latin, which was still the usual medium for literary composition. Their authors felt instinctively that the language of Cicero, of Horace, and of Livy was for their purpose impossible: between the spirit of modern Romance and the spirit of ancient Rome there is a great gulf fixed.

The foundation of the Empire under Augustus marks the date of the change: social and political institutions were thrown into the melting pot, and a new world began to find itself.

As Alexander had called in the East to redress the balance of the old world, so again the same process was repeated but on a larger scale. The centre shifts from Italy and Greece to countries that had never known the old Aegean culture, to Spain, Gaul, Syria, and Britain and the old ideas are swept away by the new currents from north, west, and east. We see the new morality beginning to appear in Seneca, the younger Pliny and Apuleius, but the ideals of romantic love do not find full expression until toward the end of the second century, and then

it is in Greek and not in Roman literature that they appear. Four Greeks by their united efforts did then for their times the work that we owe to Defoe, Sterne, Fielding, and Richardson. Lucian and Alciphron, Heliodorus and Longus created a new literary form and so at last the novel came to birth.

It has often been said that a twentieth century Englishman and a second century Greek would feel more at home with one another than with most of the intervening generations. In the Age of the Antonines, that last serene breathing space before the night of the barbarian invasions, conditions of life and thought were strangely similar to ours and they produced a similar literature, one where prose fiction tended to supersede all other forms of literary activity. Lucian (by birth a Syrian, in language a Greek, by training a cosmopolitan) is in all essentials a modern author; he wrote, it is true, eighteen hundred years ago, but his thought is the thought of to-day.

He is the fine flower of Greek sophistic, as golden voiced as Dion, but with more vigour and more versatility and he is perhaps the first prose author who made it his chief object to interest his audience. He elevates—or degrades—literature to the function of giving pleasure. The plain man has not enough sublimity of mind to appreciate the grandeur of tragedy and epic, nor does he care for the concentration of thought that history and philosophy demand. As long as literature only appealed to the élite, the lack of these higher qualities of appreciation in the mass of men was immaterial; but the whole tendency

of the Roman Empire was democratic. It was a levelling down of culture, a levelling up of material resources; the same process that has been going on in Europe for the past two centuries. What the ordinary man likes in literature is not the "big bow-wow" style, but the simple facts of life simply stated. This was Lucian's aim: to achieve simplicity and truth in imaginative prose, and he brought to the task all his wonderful versatility, his biting wit, and his powers of vivid description.

Lucian is the Defoe of Greek literature, and he plays much the same part in the development of the Greek romance as the author of *Moll Flanders* and *Captain Jack* does in the history of the English novel. Both writers are, first and foremost, journalists: journalists of the highest type, but still essentially writing for the day: with one eye perhaps fixed on eternity, but the other on their immediate audience; a habit which is a source of strength as well as of weakness, since it forces an author to keep in touch with life and not squander his talents on the vain imaginings of the study. Both Lucian and Defoe are practical, and even when they give rein to their imagination, in the *True History* as in the *Apparition of Mrs Veal*, they are careful to supply us with a solid basis of witnessed truth; they bridge the gulf between the facts of history and the fancies of romance. Lucian cannot be classed with any of his predecessors: he is not an essayist, not an historian, not a philosopher, not an orator: or rather he is a little of all these and a great deal beside. Like Defoe, he did not find his real *métier* till

comparatively late in life. Until he was forty he was a rhetorician, employed, like all the rest of the tribe, in trying to win cheap victories of bombastic argument in law courts and the lecture room: in no wise different from our political pamphleteer whose pen was at the service of the highest bidder, Whig or Tory. But about 160 A.D., as he tells us, Lucian gave up the pursuit of "Rhetoric" and took up with "Dialogue" instead: in other words he ceased to be a lecturer and became a man of letters. His first productions in the new vein are closely modelled on Plato, but he was too original a mind to be satisfied with one exemplar. As Prometheus made man from a blend of various animals, so Lucian made a new literary form by combining the Platonic dialogue with the Aristophanic comedy. The result is *Conversation* in prose, composed for purposes of entertainment like Comedy, although meant to be read, not acted; but differing from Comedy, firstly, in that its object is not entertainment pure and simple but rather the arousing of educated curiosity, secondly, in that it is written not in verse but in prose. The old convention that verse is the proper and the only medium for imaginative composition is at last destroyed.

Lucian has nearly all the qualities of the perfect novelist: he can delineate a character with the most convincing skill, whether it be an imaginary amorist like Zeus, or a real impostor like Alexander of Abonytychus: he remembers vividly the events of his own life and never hesitates to draw upon his experiences; he is interested in himself and can make

others interested. His powers of dramatic narrative are visible everywhere, and it would be difficult to surpass the sustained vigour of such a piece as "A Feast of Lapithæ." Of his wit and humour it is superfluous to speak; with the dull they soon gained for him the name of "The Scoffer" and they find full scope in the Dialogues of the Gods, the Sea Gods, the Dead, and the Hetairæ; in this last set, combined with a very shrewd perception of some of the weaker sides in the female character.

But though he possesses all these gifts, Lucian lacked the final essential—Sentiment. In none of his works is there any sign that he ever saw the beauties of nature, that he understood the charm of pure affection between men and women, or that he even knew of the existence of that feeling which we call love. He is never tired of railing at the Stoics, who try to live by the light of pure reason; but all the softer emotions leave him untouched. He prepares the way for romantic fiction, but he himself is not a romantic; the first of that long line is his contemporary Alciphron.

Alciphron is the most illustrious of the Epistolographers, the writers of imaginary epistles, whose works in Hercher's great edition run to nearly eight hundred pages; sixteen hundred letters of sixty different authors. Most of the collection is chiefly interesting as showing the perversity of the literary forger, and the Epistles of Phalaris hardly needed a Bentley to prove that they were not the genuine letters of the Sicilian tyrant. But Alciphron makes no pretence of historical authenticity: his letters are

pure invention, and in so far as they have a model, they are based on the conventions of the New Comedy.

If Lucian and Defoe have many points of resemblance, Alciphron finds an even closer parallel in Lawrence Sterne. In both authors a vein of sentiment, as genuine as it is unusual, alternates with a peculiar naughtiness, harmless enough in itself, but very disconcerting to modern ideas of propriety. They both come within an ace of being novelists and yet they both just escape classification. *Tristram Shandy* has most of the features of a novel but it cannot properly be called a novel. Alciphron is equally tantalizing: the letters—often letter and answer—are interesting and dramatic, but they are provokingly incomplete: they are a novel—or rather a number of novels—without a plot. He almost discovered one of the most interesting of romance forms, that in which the story is told in letters, the method which has given us such masterpieces as *Clarissa Harlowe* and *Les Liaisons Dangereuses*. He just fails to take the final step in construction.

Of Alciphron, his date, his birthplace and career, we know very little. Eustathius calls him "the Atticist," and it is plain from his writings that he was well acquainted with Athens and the country districts of Attica. He was probably a rhetorician by trade and almost certainly a younger contemporary of Lucian, whose satirical piece "The Banquet" he imitates in Book III, and from whom he borrows the name Lexiphanes in Book III. That the two men were friends is quite likely and Aristaenetus (fl. A.D.

500) in his imaginary epistles, an inferior copy of Alciphron, represents them as writing one to the other. The two letters have no very great interest either in a biographical or a psychological sense, and a translation of one of them will probably suffice (Aristaenetus I. 5).

Alciphron to Lucian

As a public festival was being held just outside the town, and everyone was busy eating, Charidemus too invited his friends to a banquet. A certain woman was there—I need not mention her name—whom Charidemus himself—you know how amorous our young friend is—had seen walking before him in the market-place and had looked at once and persuaded to come to his dinner. His guests were all assembled when our pretty fellow of an host came in with an old gentleman on his arm, whom he had invited to meet us. As soon as the lady saw grandpa approaching she slipped away like lightning, and in a flash was off next-door.

When she was safe there she sent for Charidemus, and said: "You do not know what a lot of mischief you have done. That old friend of yours is my husband, and he plainly recognized my shawl which I slipped off in your house. He is probably brimming over with suspicions already, but still, if you will give me the shawl and some of the sweets on the quiet, I will deceive him completely and divert the course of his nasty jealousy." She got what she asked for and hurried back home, and by all the luck in the world arrived before her lord and master, so that

she had time to arrange with her neighbour how to gull the old fellow.

It was not long before he came rushing in, panting with fury and bawling in rage,—"You wanton," he shouted, "you shall not insult my bed with impunity"—and then on the evidence of the shawl he had seen he began to accuse her of adultery, and in his mad passion to look about for a knife.

Just at that moment—it was not too soon—the neighbour popped in her head, and—"Thank you very much, my dear, for your shawl," says she, "I am very much obliged to you. I have gratified my wish to go to that dinner, and it was not much to boast about after all. Here is your share of the sweets they served us." All this of course sobered the old fellow's temper; his anger disappeared, and he so repented of his fury that he became now as mild as he had been savage. He actually apologized to his wife. "Pardon me, my dear. I confess that I was out of my senses. This is a reward for your virtue: some kind angel mercifully sent our friend here to preserve us, and by her intervention she has saved us both."

The reply from Lucian to Alciphron consists of a somewhat similar anecdote, and neither letter attempts to give us any indication of the writer's character. The two stories indeed are just the opposite of what we might expect from Alciphron. They are examples of the basely realistic *Milesian Fables*, which were in ancient literature the exact antithesis of the romance. Petronius and Apuleius represent

their influence in Latin, but Alciphron belongs to the contrary camp.

His *Letters*, as we have them in Schepers' edition, one hundred and twenty-two in number, fall into four main divisions,—the Sea, the Country, Society, Love—and the style changes from gay to serious, from pathos to jest, from moralizing to frivolity, as swiftly as in the pages of the *Sentimental Journey*. The Fishermen's and the Farmers' letters give us a picture of two small communities near Athens, one busied with the sea, the other with the land. These two sections may be compared—*mutatis mutandis*—with Mr Bernard Gilbert's "god's-eye view" of an English village in *Old England*. With Alciphron as with the English author, each character is introduced separately, and then their relations one to the other gradually emerge. Alciphron sees the possibilities of the method, and in some cases by letter and reply—or even letter, reply, and counter reply—we have an intrigue started. Unfortunately he does not push the method far enough: the intrigue no sooner starts than it ends.

The next section, the forty-two letters of *Parasites*, is perhaps less interesting to modern readers, for it is difficult to feel much sympathy for the woes of these unfortunates who, having no fortune of their own and being too idle to work for a living, were forced to gain the rich food they coveted by submitting to the capricious insults of a rich patron. But in his variations on this one theme Alciphron is amazingly fertile, and his invention of names for his characters shows a comic verve worthy of Aristo-

phanes himself. As in the previous letters the scene is still Athens and the period towards the end of the fourth century B.C., but there is a strong Roman flavour about many of the episodes, and for his names Alciphron does not shrink from an anachronism, so that some of his most prodigious creations are a blend of Latin and Greek.

In the *Parasites* Alciphron draws near to Lucian; in the *Courtesans* he is triumphantly himself, and his heroines are presented to us with far more sympathy and understanding than Lucian could ever command. In this section the persons are no longer pure imagination; many of them are historical characters imaginatively treated—the method of our historical novel. We have Philemon, Diphilus, and Menander, the three chief writers of the New Comedy, together with the latter's mistress, Glycera, from whom he drew his delightful heroine "The girl with the bobbed hair." Phryne, the most famous of beauties, appears with her sculptor Praxiteles and her advocate Hyperides. Leontion, the friend of Epicurus, gives us a very different account of her relations with the great philosopher than that which we gather from Landor's *Imaginary Conversations*. Finally, as an ornament to these simple civilians, we see the two most notable of Alexander's successors, Ptolemy the cautious king of Egypt and Demetrius the young and gallant "Sacker of Cities."

The ladies, real and imaginary, belong all to one profession and have the gratification of men as their chief purpose in life; but they exhibit very different shades of character. There is the practical and

sagacious Glycera, the proud Phryne, and the wanton Megara: Petale and Philumena are excessively business-like, Thaïs and Myrrhina go to the other extreme: Leaena writes spitefully, Lamia lovingly, and each letter tells its own story. All these portraits of women are life-like, but perhaps the most effective of all is the picture of his dead mistress, drawn by Euthycles for his friend, Bk. IV. 11. Here Alciphron reaches to the true spirit of romance; parallels to various passages might be found in the elegiac poets of Greece and Rome, but there is nothing like it in prose before his time. Sentiment and imagination, hitherto confined to the domain of poetry, are at last set free for the use of the prose novelist and the final step taken to ensure the birth of romance.

At the close of the second century, as we can see now, the romantic novel was in the air, only waiting for its appropriate medium to take its place in literature. Its chief theme, romantic love, is in fact a compromise between eastern asceticism and pagan sensuality, such a compromise as in the sphere of morals and religion Pauline Christianity was then gradually effecting. The emotion, real enough in itself, derives part of its strength from the imagination and to that extent is artificial. It feeds and is fed on literature, and the elaborate prose which the sophists of the second century were just beginning to use for imaginative work, supplied, for the first time, an entirely suitable medium for the expression of the changing fancies of youthful love. The conditions of social life too were all in its favour.

Women were now almost as important as men, and while men have invented for themselves countless diversions which they call politics, business, or sport, women have always centred their attention on that vital necessity with which the romance is concerned. Lastly, the material prosperity of the Empire turned people more and more to the pursuit of pleasure, and in the novel a form of literature was discovered whose chief purpose is to please.

There were, of course, love stories written in prose long before 200 A.D.—the Ninus romance found recently in Egypt probably dates from about the beginning of our era, and the lost stories, *The Wonders Beyond Thule* and *The Babylonian History* of Iamblichus may perhaps be assigned to the late first century—but they were scarcely literature. The first romantic novelist, who was also an artist in words, is Longus, and his *Daphnis and Chloë* does really strike a new note.

If Longus is indebted to any of his predecessors, it is to Theocritus, the poet who sang the pastoral loves of Corydon and Amaryllis and made a romantic figure of the giant Polyphemus. But the debt is small; Longus is a new worker in a new field and for him as for Theocritus, when the fire of the Greek spirit seemed almost dead, then once again the god poured out the sacred oil and once more from the dead embers there leapt the bright fire of inspiration. Who Longus was, when and where he lived, are all matters of doubt: his very name is uncertain, and his date is often incorrectly given.

Anatole France, for example, imagines him as a Byzantine of the sixth or seventh century, writing for the blasé courtiers and merchants of the great capital.

"Le Chloé du roman grec ne fut jamais une vraie bergère et son Daphnis ne fut jamais un vrai chevrier : pourtant ils nous plaisent encore. Le grec subtil qui nous conta leur historie ne se souciait point d'étables ni de boucs. Il n'avait souci que de poésie et d'amour."

But both the style and the manner of the book are decisively against a late date, and what real evidence we have would put Longus about 200 B.C., and make him practically a contemporary of Lucian and Alciphron. His book, however, alone is of importance, and in spite of one or two lapses it is a masterpiece; in Amyot's translation a French as well as a Greek classic.

"There is a city in Lesbos, Mytilene, large and beautiful. Inlets of the sea run up and divide the town, while bridges of white polished stone adorn it. You would think you were looking not at a city but an island. About two hundred furlongs away a certain rich man had a farm, a beautiful estate: mountains, where wild creatures lived, plains that produced wheat, rising ground for vines, pasture land for flocks. And the sea washed a broad open beach of white sand."

So the story begins. It was on this estate that one day a shepherd Lamon found a boy child whom he took home and called Daphnis; here, also, that two years later his neighbour Dryas found another

lost babe to whom he gave the name of Chloë. The children were brought up together, and in the spring-time when lambs were skipping, bees humming, and birds singing in every bush, they also would skip, sing, and gather the honey-flowers; together they tended their flocks and shared the pleasures and pains of a shepherd's life. At last one day Daphnis pursuing a wolf falls into a pit whence a friendly shepherd, with the help of Chloë's waistband, extricates him, all besmeared with mud. Lest their parents should be alarmed, they wash the stains away, and while so doing Chloë for the first time feels the smart of love. "What ailed her she knew not, but soon her heart was full of pain: she cared not for food, she lay awake at nights, she neglected her flock, all her talk was of Daphnis: she could not keep her eyes still; now she would laugh, now cry: at one moment she would doze and then again start up from her sleep: her face was now pale, now all afire with red." Such are the phases of the malady as Longus describes them.

Daphnis for his part is at first untouched, but when a rival youth, Dorcon, comes a-courting and the maiden, queen of the contest, gives Daphnis the prize of a kiss, his heart too is set on fire.—"It was as though he had been not kissed but stung: he could not stop the quick beating of his heart: he longed to look at Chloë, and when he looked he turned all rosy red. Then for the first time he marvelled at her hair, how golden it was and her eyes wide open like a heifer's and her face more white than goat's milk." Once a chatterer the lad now falls silent;

his face is paler than the grass in summer: he cannot understand how everything about him, flocks, birds, and flowers, seems indifferent to his pain. Nature indeed conspires to increase the young lovers' torments — "It was now the end of spring and the beginning of summer: everything was at its prime, the trees were full of fruit, the fields of grain. Sweet the sound of the cicada, pleasant the bleating of the flocks, lovely the scent of the ripe fruit. One might fancy that the rivers were singing softly as they ran, that the breezes were piping as they blew among the pine trees, that the fruit fell to the ground for love, and the sun amorous of beauty stripped men of their clothes." Dorcon tries in vain to secure Chloë's hand in marriage; some Tyrian pirates land and capture Daphnis for a moment, but these are only episodes to the main theme—the influence of love on virgin hearts.

The time of vintage brings strangers to the countryside who vex the young people with unsought attentions; among others a certain old man Philetas tells them that he has had a dream—they are destined to be slaves of Love. "And what is Love?" Daphnis asks. "Love is divine" Philetas answers, "and from him there is no way of escape save one."

But before the old man's precepts can take effect, the quiet course of life is again disturbed. Some youths from Methymna attack Daphnis because of an imagined wrong, and when condemned before a rustic arbitrator, carry Chloë away in their ship. The god Pan interferes, and she returns unharmed; but autumn is now over, and in the winter the lovers have

little opportunity of meeting. Still love finds a way: Daphnis waits outside Dryas' cottage under pretext of snaring birds, until he is invited in. "And when they saw one another again they almost sank to the ground: it was with an effort that they kept their feet and spoke and kissed." The lovers, of course, have to separate soon, but Daphnis finds other pretexts for an occasional visit; always, when leaving, he embraced his hosts first, so that Chloë's kiss may remain undisturbed upon his lips. So the winter passes; with the spring the flocks go back to the fields, and life and love return. A young married woman, Lycaenium, becomes enamoured of Daphnis, and soon he is no longer wholly innocent; but he remains constant with a pure love to Chloë, and is himself endangered by the schemes of a disgusting parasite, Gnatho. So real is his peril that Lamon discloses to his master the circumstances of his birth; the tokens discovered with him are examined, and he is found to be the master's own lost son. Chloë in her turn recovers her father, a rich merchant, and the tale ends, as all romances should, with a marriage. In a postcript the author tells us that they lived happy ever after, and had two children.

The style of Longus is perfect, for it is exactly suited to his subject. Apparently simple and artless, it really follows the most elaborate laws of prose rhythm: the passages that seem the most natural are the result of endless polishing and pains; but the art is so successfully hidden that it needs a trained ear to detect the subtle harmonies of a prose which is as musical as the lightest lyric. It is impossible to

reproduce these melodies in English, for they depend on transpositions which are foreign to our usage ; but even in our rough tongue they sometimes may be faintly heard.

"Dost see how like the hyacinth is his hair, and how beneath his eyebrows his eyes flash forth like a jewel in a setting of gold! His face is all one rosy flush, his teeth are white like ivory . . . Anchises was a neat-herd, and yet Aphrodite took him for her own. Branchus tended goats, and yet Apollo kissed him. Ganymede was a shepherd, and the lord of all things ravished him away. Let us not despise the lad; we see the goats obedient like lovers to him. Nay, rather, let us be grateful to the eagles of Zeus that they allow such beauty to remain on earth."

Altogether different from this is the effect of quaint simplicity which appears in the sixteenth-century French translation, and in some of the early English versions, such as that of G. Thornley, London, 1657. "Adorned with cutts, a most sweet and pleasant pastorall for young ladies."

Longus is not simple; indeed, he is often, though unjustly, called a decadent both in style and morals. He comes towards the end of one period of the world's history, but he is the harbinger of a new age. And as it is with the style, so it is with the subject and general character of the book. To those familiar with the grandeurs of epic and tragedy, the tale of Daphnis and Chloë has often seemed of a simplicity scarcely worthy of the dignity of Greek literature. A boy and girl, humble peasant folk living in the country, fall in love, and after a few simple adven-

tures, marry. That is all the plot, but Longus knew that exciting incidents are not always needed. Like Richardson he concerns himself almost entirely with the human heart; the externals of life he disregards. Chloë, like Pamela, is only a humble country lass; but, like Pamela also, she is the universal woman: both books have an appearance of simplicity which in reality they are very far from possessing. Longus is not simple, but he is outspoken; and here again the Greek Sophist and the London printer agree to the confusion of critics. Bishop Huet objects even to the last chapter of Daphnis—"A romance," he says, "should end with the marriage, and say nothing of its results: a heroine who is the mother of children surely cuts a very strange figure." Mr Dunlop is equally severe—"The general moral attempted to be inculcated in the romance is not absolutely bad; yet there are particular passages so extremely reprehensible that I know nothing like them in almost any work whatever." The apologetic "almost" just saves the criticism from gross exaggeration, and we must suppose that the critic had either never read or else had forgotten a very considerable part of ancient literature. Longus, so far from being immoral, is almost the first writer who shows any perception of chivalrous feeling. His hero Daphnis is a gentleman; perhaps the first gentleman in matters of sentiment that we find in Greek literature. He loves his mistress sufficiently to refuse to hurt her, and his love is not merely a matter of selfish gratification. There are certainly passages in the book which are more outspoken than our habit of reticence allows,

and there are unpleasant scenes and characters, Lycaenium and Gnatho for example, but they have a full artistic justification. Their amours are unnatural and repulsive, but they serve as an excellent foil to the love of the young couple, which is beautiful because it is in accordance with nature.

This indeed is the signal merit of Longus. Long before Rousseau he discovers the return to nature: the charm and pleasure of a country life. His followers, and they have been many, St Pierre in *Paul and Virginia*, Chateaubriand in *Atala*, Zola in *L'Abbé Mouret*, even a modern popular novelist like Mr Stacpoole in the *Blue Lagoon*, have all instinctively copied his setting of scenery—a lonely countryside where the young lovers are left to nature's own guidance.

But Longus is a psychologist, and although the psychology of love is of permanent interest, for as he says "no one has ever escaped Love or will escape, so long as beauty is and eyes see," yet the average man prefers the romance of adventure to the close analysis of sentiment and emotion. Longus is the master of all those who from Richardson to Meredith have tried to fathom the mysteries of the human heart; but the great majority of our novelists choose rather the externals of life, its accidents and escapes, and find their first model in Heliodorus.

Of Heliodorus and the facts of his life we know as little as we do of Longus. That he was the Christian Bishop of Tricca, who flourished about 400 B.C., is for many reasons highly improbable, and the story that being given his choice between his bishopric and

his book, he preferred the latter is just one of those anecdotes which are suitable enough for prose fiction but quite out of place in critical history. All that we can certainly say of Heliodorus is that he was the author of the *Aethiopica.* His date is doubtful and is usually, on the strength of the bishop story, put two centuries too late: he probably lived about the beginning of the third century. The only real evidence we have is that of style, which obviously belongs to the same period as Longus; but it has been supposed, with some probability, that the elaborate account of the Gymnosophists is based directly on Apollonius of Tyana and this would support the earlier date. The story itself is laid in the days before the time of Alexander the Great, and of allusions to events that might fix the date of composition there are none. But the exact date is immaterial: Heliodorus is plainly the last of our four authors and the *Aethiopica* fixes the usual type of the romantic novel.

"One morning at the first smile of dawn, just when the sun was lighting up the mountain tops, some robbers, sword in hand, came creeping over a hill which stretches by the mouth of the Nile called Heracleotis, where the river runs into the sea. For a moment they halted and surveyed the waters beneath them; their eyes ranged over the ocean but nothing that could be prey for pirates was visible sailing there. Then their looks turned to the beach hard by and this was what they saw."

So the *Aethiopica* begins, and it may be doubted whether any novel has a more vigorous commence-

ment. A vivid description of the scene upon the beach follows: men, dead and dying, lie about a pirate galley, their revels interrupted by a drunken brawl; near them sit their two captives, a maiden wondrous fair and a wounded youth, Chariclea and Theagenes. The robbers seize them and carry them off to a lair among the marshes, but who the unfortunate pair are we only learn as the romance proceeds, for Heliodorus is a master of the art of construction and knows full well the advantage to be gained from suspense. From the first the plot is intricate, but never confused: each thread of the story is held firmly in the author's guiding hands and the central incident, the secret of Chariclea's birth, is reserved for the middle of the book. But it will perhaps be convenient to give the tale in chronological order.

One day the queen of Aethiopia by a strange accident gives birth to a white skinned child. Fearing her husband's suspicions she entrusts the baby to one Sisimithres, who in turn consigns her to Charicles, priest of Delphi. Chariclea, for so she is now called, spends her childhood in Greece, and when approaching womanhood receives as tutor an aged Egyptian named Calasiris, whose duty it is to prepare her for marriage with the nephew of Charicles. But these plans are interrupted by the arrival at Delphi of Theagenes "a young man" (to quote Underdown's translation) "of Achilles' courage indeed, who in countenance and stomache appeared no lesse, with a straight neck, hie-foreheaded with his hair in coomely sort rebending down, his nose and nosthrilles wide enough to take breathe, which is a token of courage

and strength: his eyes not very grey but grey and blacke which made him looke somewhat fiercely and yet very amiably, not much unlike the sea which is newe calmed after a boysterous tempest."

Chariclea naturally becomes enamoured of this paragon and in company with Calasiris the lovers fly from Delphi. But they are captured first by pirates and then by the Egyptian robbers; Chariclea, it is needless to say, suffering much vexation from the amorous advances of the bandit chiefs. Finally they are rescued by the governor of Egypt and Thyamis, the captain of the robbers, now discovered to be the son of Calasiris, is elected high priest of Memphis, whither all parties repair. The lovers for a moment see happiness before them, but unfortunately the beauty of Theagenes inflames the passions of Queen Arsace who in her husband's absence rules at Memphis. On his virtuous refusal to accede to her advances the queen orders his torture and Chariclea's death, but before her command is executed a dispatch arrives announcing that the absent monarch has discovered his wife's intrigue. Arsace hangs herself and the lovers are escorted to King Oroondates. On their way, however, they are captured by the Ethiopians, whose king Hydaspes, Chariclea's father, defeats Oroondates in a great battle. The prisoners are about to be sacrificed as a thank-offering to the Sun, when a ring and fillet fastened to Chariclea's body reveal her as the long lost child. Charicles opportunely arrives to explain all further details, Chariclea is recognized as heiress to the throne, and the young couple are at last united.

Such is an outline of the main incidents in the *Aethiopica*, but we have taken no account of the many subordinate narratives that swell the story into a very large compass. The habit of digression, which existed in our own practice at least down to the time of Thackeray, may be traced back to Heliodorus: his ninth book is almost entirely concerned with the campaign between the Aethiopians and the Egyptians; a good part of the first book with the history of Cnemon, his lustful stepmother, and her treacherous maid servant, a little novel in itself.

From tragedy and comedy, from the epic and from Alexandrian poetry Heliodorus took his incidents and fashioned his characters into types which still persist in prose fiction. The permanence of these types may best be seen by a comparison of the *Aethiopica* with any of Fielding's books, with *Amelia*, with *Joseph Andrews*, or best of all with that which is still one of the greatest half-dozen novels in English, *Tom Jones*. Our hero Theagenes in his immaculate virtue is certainly nearer to Joseph Andrews than to Tom Jones, but the chief personages of both novels are the same: a pair of lovers, one of them a foundling, who after many trials of constancy and chastity are united in marriage. The temptations to which Theagenes and the subordinate hero Cnemon are exposed by Arsace and Thisbe are the same as those which are used by Lady Bellaston and Molly Seagrim: Calasiris, like Squire Allworthy, makes it his chief business in life to protect unfortunate foundlings: most of the other male characters try in vain to shake the constancy of the

heroine. It is not suggested that the English novelist consciously borrowed from the Greek, but it is certain that the chief characters in *Tom Jones* live with a far less intense life than those others who strictly play a subordinate part in the plot. Partridge, Squire Western, Square and Thwackum refuse to conform to type: they are new creations sprung full-born from Fielding's brain: the others are the stock Dramatis Personæ, puppets whom Heliodorus first invented and put in motion.

Heliodorus has incurred a good deal of unkind criticism. It is said that his hero is wooden—a charge made against many an author from Virgil to Scott—for critics forget that it is only a woman novelist who can draw a really romantic hero; men know too much or too little of their own sex to use their imagination convincingly. Again complaint is made of the arbitrary way in which he deals with incidents, and Dunlop plaintively remarks:—

"As to probability of incident, Heliodorus outrages all verisimilitude in different ways; as, for example, by the extraordinary interviews, which he brings about, and the summary manner in which he disposes of a character which has become supernumerary. When it is convenient for him that two persons should meet, one of them comes to travel in a country where apparently he has nothing to do, and when a character becomes superfluous, the author finds no better resource than informing us that he was bit by an asp or died suddenly in the night."

This is merely querulous: unexpected events enliven a narrative and sudden deaths unfortunately

are common in real life: nor does Heliodorus overtax either expedient.

Lastly his style is said to be over-ornate, fantastic and poetical, composed of tags from Homer and the tragedians. As a matter of fact, those who will consult the Greek and forget for a moment the quaintness of Amyot and the conceits of Underdown, will find a simple prose, plain yet picturesque, admirably suited for imaginative narrative. There are certainly many reminiscences and occasional quotations from the poets, but these are no great blemish in a romance which might be called poetical history. The style has not the graceful charm of Longus but it is perfectly adequate. When all is said, Heliodorus is a great author: no one can reproach him with poverty of invention: he sows from a full sack: incident follows incident, character character, and not a person appears on the scene without having his own story first to divulge. His heroine too is beyond cavil: that when she was still only seven she seemed almost of marriageable age may be imputed either to the warmth of the climate or the miraculous circumstances of her birth; as a woman in the book Chariclea is a wonder of beauty, virtue, and courage. In the opening scenes there are some reminiscences of Euripides' Electra, the purest type of sisterly love—and indeed the sisterly relationship is used several times as a subterfuge by the lovers—but in all essentials she is Heliodorus' own invention and a most significant proof of the change that was coming over men's minds as regards women.

No, when the account is cast up, the merits of the *Aethiopica* far outweigh its defects. Achilles Tatius, Xenophon of Ephesus, Chariton, and the rest of the Greek romancers follow closely on the lines that Heliodorus lays down. His influence on modern literature has been equally great. Tasso, Racine, and Mme de Scudery are only a few of the authors who have acknowledged their indebtedness. Our own Elizabethan novelists, Lyly and the rest, borrow incessantly, and even Sidney, as we know now by manuscript evidence, completely remodelled his best work after reading Heliodorus. The *Aethiopica* is a book far more elaborate in its structure than *Daphnis and Chloë*, although Longus beneath his apparent simplicity conceals the finer art. *Daphnis and Chloë* is unique and in its own "genre" has never been surpassed; the *Aethiopica* owes its importance partly to its position in history. It is the first example of a type which has, since the days of Heliodorus, attracted authors far greater than he. Fielding, Scott, Dumas, Balzac, are all his spiritual sons and they have left their father far behind. Still Heliodorus is the first begetter of the clan, and deserves at least the veneration that children should give to age. To him belongs the credit of inventing the romance of adventure, and those who write and read our modern novels should at least once in their lives peruse the pages of the Aethiopian History.

As a matter of fact, it is to one of the four Greek masters that nearly every modern novel traces, and sometimes a novelist will use all four models in turn.

Such a typical modern as Mr Compton Mackenzie, for example, follows Lucian in *Sylvia Scarlett,* Longus in *Guy and Pauline,* Alciphron in *Rich Relatives* and Heliodorus in *The Passionate Elopement.* As for the extreme psychologists, Proust in *A la recherche du temps perdu*, and Joyce in *Ulysses*, they are merely retracing their steps. They have already reached the extreme limits to which the substance of the psychological novel can be stretched. A little more straining and the form will collapse, and we shall be back with Plato again.

THE TEXT OF ALCIPHRON

THE first complete edition of Alciphron was that of Bergler, Leipzig 1715. Bergler printed, from a Vatican manuscript, seventy-two letters which had not appeared in the Aldine edition and arranged the collection in three books. His edition was followed by Seiler, Leipzig 1853, and by Hercher, Didot, Paris 1873, who both maintained his arrangement. In 1905 the Dutch scholar, M. A. Schepers of Groningen, undertook a thorough examination of the manuscripts and produced, for the first time, a really satisfactory edition with the letters arranged in four books. This translation follows Schepers' text and numbering, with one exception. The letter from Glycera to Bacchis that he numbers iv. 2 appears here as iv. 17.

BOOK I

Letters from the Country

I. THE FISHERMEN

1. *Charles Cheerful to Stephen Shipley.*
2. *Silas Still to Bob Weely.*
3. *David Gray to his wife.*
4. *James Swiftsea to his wife.*
5. *Joe Boatwright to Fred Foamer.*
6. *Mrs Sharpsight to her husband.*
7. *Jack Briny to Jim Salt.*
8. *Dick Diver to his wife.*
9. *Matthew Beach to Algernon Sparrow.*
10. *Herbert Head to Jim Salt.*
11. *Jane Gray to her mother.*
12. *Mrs Gray to her daughter.*
13. *Fred Fisher to Mat Hunt.*
14. *Tom Tunny to Ned Clyffe.*
15. *Will Wherry to Sam Stern.*
16. *Nat Neckan to George Geary.*
17. *Ben Breaker to Tom Storm.*
18. *Tom Storm to Ben Breaker.*
19. *Ben Breaker to Tom Storm.*
20. *Sam Seine to John Portreeve.*
21. *Dick Goodsail to Ralph Sealove.*
22. *Ralph Sealove to Dick Goodsail.*

I

Charles Cheerful to Stephen Shipley

VERY conveniently for us this morning the sea sank into a calm. Three days the storm had been raging: the north winds blew fiercely from the heights down on to the sea, making the surface black and rough; while the foam, like white flowers, burst from the crests of the rollers. All around the waves dashed one against the other; some sweeping on the rocks, others swelling from within, until they broke in spray. It was quite impossible to work. We took possession of the huts on the beach and lit ourselves a fire, using the chips of wood which the shipwrights had left when they were cutting down the oak trees last month. The blaze was a comfort against the bitter cold and at last this fourth morning dawned—a halcyon day, methinks, if the clear sky is evidence—and brought to us good store of blessings. As soon as the sun appeared and its first ray flashed upon the sea, we quickly dragged down our little boat which we had before hauled high and dry, put our nets in it, and got to work. We loosed a little way from the shore and, by Jove, what a shoal! The masses of fish we pulled up!

The net was so bursting with them that it almost dragged the corks under. The fish buyers were waiting there with their yokes on their shoulders and a basket at each end, and when they had paid us our money they started off in haste with their load citywards. We had enough fish for them all, and besides took home for our wives and children a great heap of the smaller fry, sufficient to give them their fill, not merely for one day but for several, if the bad weather should come again.

II

Silas Still to Bob Weely

We work and work, Bob, and it is all no use. In the day time we are scorched by the heat of the sun, at night we sweep the sea depths in the glare of torches. As the proverb goes, we pour water into a bottomless jar and all our labour is barren and unprofitable. We cannot even fill our stomach with sea-nettles or mussels: our master collects both fish and cash. Nor is it enough for him to have all that we make; he is continually searching the boat for more. The other day, when we were at Munychia and sent that young fellow Hermon to take him our catch, he told him that we must get a cargo of sponge as well and some of that sea wool which grows so freely in the meadows of Eurynome. This was the last straw. Hermon left his load, fish and all, and left us too, smack and all, and went off in a row-boat, and joined the Rhodian shell gatherers. So our master lost a good servant and we a good comrade.

III

David Gray to his Wife

The earth is good and ploughed fields bring no danger: the sea is cruel and navigation is a risky business. I am right in my judgement for I have learned my lesson from experience. The other day when I was selling fish I listened to one of those pale cheeked fellows who lounge about in the Painted Porch with nothing on their feet, and I heard him recite a line of poetry which rebuked the folly of us seafarers. He said it was written by one Aratus, a weather expert, and, as far as I can remember, it went something like this. "One slender plank between yourself and doom." Let us be sensible then, wife, and even at this late hour escape from the near vicinity of death. We have our children to consider, and though we are too poor to have much to leave them, we can at least guarantee them this boon. They need never know of swelling waves and the dangers of the deep: they will get their livelihood by tilling the fields and enjoy a safe and peaceable existence.

IV

James Swiftsea to his Wife

As the sea differs from the land, so are we who work on it different from those who live in cities or villages. They either stay within the town gates busy with civic affairs, or else attend to their farming and await the produce of the land for sustenance. But for us, whose life is on the waters, the land is death: we are like fish unable to breathe there. What ails you then, wife, that you leave the sea shore and the flax you have to spin, and go gadding to town to join the rich ladies of Athens at the Festivals of the Vine Branch and the Grape Press. That is neither virtuous living nor honest thinking. It was not for this that your father in Aegina—for there as it happened you were born and bred—it was not for this that he gave you to me to initiate in the mysteries of wedlock. If you are so fond of city life—good-bye and get out. But if you can be contented with the sea, choose the better part and return to your husband, and forget forever the alluring spectacles of the town.

V

Joe Boatwright to Fred Foamer

You think that you are the only wealthy man amongst us and try to ensnare my servants with higher wages and get them to your house. I am not surprised. The other day a cast of your net brought you a pile of golden sovereigns, relics perhaps of the battle of Salamis from some Persian galley that sank there, crew, cargo, and all, in the time of our ancestors when Themistocles, son of Neocles, raised the great trophy over the Persians. I for my part am content if I provide myself with a bare sufficiency by the daily work of my hands. If you are rich, combine riches with fair dealing: let your money be a servant, not in wrong doing but in honourable conduct.

VI

Mrs Sharpsight to her Husband

When you married me, John, I was not an outcast or a woman of low degree : my father and my mother were both people of rank and they gave me to you, with an estate as a marriage portion, that children might be begotten from us in lawful wedlock. But you were always infatuated with women, your eyes caught by every pretty face, and now you pay no regard to me or our children, our daughter Tranquillity and our Sea-boy, but have fallen enamoured of that foreign wench from Hermione. It is to the ruin of her lovers that the Piraeus shelters her ; for all our young seamen go flocking to her house, each one with a different gift; and she, like another Charybdis, takes everyone in and consumes them all. But you of course must outshine these fishermen's offerings: you do not take her sprats; you would not dream of giving her mullet. You are getting on in years, an old married man, the father of children who are not precisely babies, and you mean to push aside all rivals. Veils from Miletus, dresses from Sicily, yes and gold besides ; that is what

she receives from you. Have done, I say, with your insolent debaucheries and stop your madness or else I will go to my father. He will take my part and bring you into court for ill-treatment.

VII

Jack Briny to Jim Salt

I SENT you a sole and a turbot and a mullet and thirty-five large shell-fish. Please send me a pair of oars, for mine are broken. From friends to friends exchange is fair. If you ask readily and without hesitation it shows that between comrades you think the saying holds—"What is mine is yours."

VIII

Dick Diver to his Wife

Those who are doubtful in their own minds wait for their friends' decision. I have debated this matter already with the winds—for I was afraid to mention it to you, wife—but now I am going to speak out and beg you to decide for the best and advise me. You shall hear how things stand and what it is I want you to settle. As you know, we are very badly off and life is very difficult : the sea is a bad foster-mother. That oared galley you see over there with the large crew of rowers is a Corycian boat and the company on board are pirates. They want me to join them in their criminal trade and they promise heaps on heaps of money. The gold they offer and their fine clothes tempt me sorely, but I could never consent to murder or let blood stain the hands which the sea from my childhood till now has kept clean of all wrong doing. And yet to stay here with poverty as constant companion is a hard lot and scarcely to be borne. Do you weigh the matter and decide. To which-ever side you incline, wife, that way I will take. Doubts are best cut short by a comrade's advice.

IX

Matthew Beach to Algernon Sparrow

Deuce take it, how contrary things are! I am a real Jonah man. It is but starveling comfort to buy all you want for a few pence when you only get a few pence for what you sell. The time is ripe for you, good Mr Sparrow, to join in with us and thereby to get your share of comfort from what the sea produces. I propose that you should recommend me to one or two of your rich friends, Erasicles of Sphettus for example or Philostratus of Cholargus, so that I may supply them with fish straight from the fish basket. In any case, beside the money they pay, your recommendation will ensure us some comforts from them at the Brotherhood Feast and the Festival of Dionysus. Besides it will save us from the harshness of the market superintendents who every day annoy us peaceable folk in order to make profit for themselves. You parasites have great influence with rich young men: that is proved not by words but by deeds.

X

Herbert Head to Jim Salt

THE waves, as you see, are ruffled, the sky is veiled in mist, and clouds are all around. The winds dash one against the other and threaten soon to throw the ocean into turmoil. The dolphins as they leap up and spring lightly from the swelling breakers give warning of the approach of storm and rough gales. Weather experts say that the constellation of the Bull has risen and now holds the sky. People often get home safe and sound if they take thought beforehand and beware of danger. But there are men who once trusting themselves to the sea get into difficulties and have to let chance guide their rudder. These are they of whom we hear as swept away by a tempest off Malea, or in the straits of Messina, or even to the African sea where they strike a reef or sink beneath the waves. In the way of storm and danger Caphereus is as bad as any headland. So we will wait till the sky clears and the sea is not so high and then we will stroll as far as the beach under Caphereus and give honourable burial to any corpse we find there cast up from a shipwreck. Kind

deeds never go unrewarded, even if you do not see a return immediately. A good conscience is a very great pleasure and cheers the heart, especially if the service be rendered to your own people after their death.

XI

Jane Gray to her Mother

I CANNOT contain myself, mother; I cannot endure now to marry that stripling from Methymna, the pilot's son, who my father told me the other day was to be my husband. I have seen some one else, a youth at Athens who was carrying the vine branch in the procession on the day you sent me to the city to watch the festival. He is beautiful, mother; so beautiful and such a darling. His curls are more crisp than hazel blossoms, his smile is more charming than the summer sea. When he looks at you his eyes gleam with a dark radiance, even as the ocean gleams beneath the rays of the sun. And his whole face!—you would say that on his cheeks dance all the Graces from Orchomenus, after they have bathed in the Argaphian spring. As for his lips, he has filched the roses from Aphrodite's bosom and made them bloom again upon their surface. Either I marry him, or else like Sappho of Lesbos I will fling myself, not from the cliffs of Leucas, but from the piers of the Piraeus into the foam.

XII

Mrs Gray to her Daughter

You are mad, my dear girl; quite out of your mind. What you need is a draught of good hellebore from Anticyra. You ought to show a maiden's modesty; but you have banished all shame from your cheeks. Get some control over yourself and scourge the mischief out of your heart. If your father were to hear of it, he will not hesitate or argue; he will throw you into the sea for the fish to devour.

XIII

Fred Fisher to Mat Hunt

THERE was abundance of fish and the chance of a good catch; but I had torn my seine and did not know what to do. I puzzled my brains like Old Harry and at last decided to go to Cash the money-lender and mortgage my boat to him for four pounds, so as to renew the net. I did it in less time than it takes to tell you. Cash, the old bag of bones with his frowning eyebrows and fierce look, put off all his usual roughness—he was in love perhaps with my wherry—and smiled at me with quite a gentle expression and, said he—"I am just the person you want to help you." It was plain that he meant no good by this complete change-over and I soon found that his generosity was a foul pretence. When the day for payment came he claimed both capital and interest, and refused to give me any time. Then, too late, I realized that he was the same old Cash whom I had always known sitting at the city gate, the enemy of all men with his crooked stick. Indeed he was prepared to distrain on my boat. I saw what a plight I was in; so I ran home and tore off my wife's gold necklace which I had given her as an ornament when

I was well off. Then I hurried to the banker Pasion and sold it to him and taking the money paid Cash his loan, interest complete. And I swore a great oath that I would never consent to go to a city usurer again, even if I starved for it. It is better to die as an honest man than live as the slave of a greedy old miser.

XIV

Tom Tunny to Ned Clyffe

HAVE you heard the lamentable news, Clyffe? The Athenians have determined to fight and are sending a fleet abroad. Their two fastest galleys, the Paralos and the Salaminia, are off already to reconnoitre with their look-out men on board. The rest of the fleet will start when they have their full war complement of oars-men trained to fight against winds and waves. What shall we do, friend? Run away or stand fast? They are levying men from all the sea-folk of Piraeus and Phalerum and Sunium, yes and even from the districts round Geraestus. We know nothing of city manners; so how shall we stand being drilled or act as servants to men-at-arms? Either choice is difficult. Shall we think of our wives and children and shirk it, or shall we risk our lives in battle and on sea together? There is no profit to be got by standing our ground: we shall make more by running away.

XV

Will Wherry to Sam Stern

I NEVER realized till yesterday how wanton and luxurious are our rich Athenian youths. The sea was calm and young Hearty with some of his friends hired my boat, meaning to sail along the shore and join in our fishing. Then I saw what occasions for enjoyment are given them by sea and land alike. He could not endure the timbers of my craft but must recline on foreign rugs and blankets. I suppose the planks were too rough for him and, said he,—"It is quite impossible for me to lie down on deck with the rest of you." Then he asked us to stretch the sail canvas over, so as to provide him with shade—"My complexion cannot stand the sun." With us —and by "us" I mean not only our poor fellow-workers but everyone who has not a superfluity of money—with us, I say, it is something to be thankful for if we can get the sun to warm us: cold and sea water are all in the day's work. Well, we sailed on together: young Hearty was not alone nor yet accompanied only by his comrades: they had with them a party of damsels, very pretty creatures, music girls by trade. One of them,

—they called her "Belle,"—was a flute player; another "Lovebird," had brought a dulcimer; another "Pretty pet" clashed a pair of cymbals together. My boat was full of music; the waves rang with their singing; everything was bright and gay. It is true that I did not feel much pleasure at the time; for many of my comrades and especially that offensive brute Gray—he is worse than a devil—were casting jealous looks at us. But when Hearty paid me a good fat fee, the money cheered me up, and now I am quite content with his marine entertainment and only want to find such another lavish and extravagant youth.

XVI

Nat Neckan to George Geary

If you can help me, pray tell me your opinion, but do not let anyone else know: if you are unable to be of assistance, keep more close than a judge of the Areopagus. I will explain how things stand with me. Love has plunged into my life and will not permit me to be guided by reason: the sober part of me is now continually overwhelmed by passion. How was it, I wonder, that Love swooped down on a poor fisherman who was quite content if he could provide himself with a bare livelihood? How is it that he clings so close and never lets go, while I, like some young handsome gallant, burn with desire? I who once laughed at the wanton slaves of passion am now all passion's prey. To-day I long for marriage and am dreaming ever of the Hymeneal God, the child of mirth and merriment. The girl I love is the daughter of those strangers from Hermione who get some sort of miserable living in the Piraeus. I cannot offer a dowry but I can show them what a valiant man I am at sea-craft, and if her father is in his right mind I think I can prove myself a suitable match.

XVII

Ben Breaker to Tom Storm

THE other day on the beach at Sunium I saw an old dilapidated net. I asked whose it was and how it happened to be lying there, for it had not only been torn from its bladders, but by lapse of time had become full of holes. The people told me that four years ago it belonged to you, but that it had caught one day on a hidden rock which had made a big gap in the meshes at the middle. They said that you had not troubled either to mend or remove it, and so it remained there, none of them caring to touch it as it was not their property. It is now a piece of flotsam belonging neither to them nor to you, its former owner, and I am therefore asking you for something which by disuse and lapse of time has ceased to be yours. You consigned it to complete destruction, and I hope that you will be prepared now to give it to me; which you can do without loss to yourself.

XVIII

Tom Storm to Ben Breaker

THE eyes of neighbours, as the proverb says, are full of jealousy and spite. What have you to do with my property? Why should you think because I choose to regard a thing with indifference that it therefore belongs to you? Keep your hands off, and restrain your greedy desires, and do not let your craving for other people's goods force you to ask for unfair favours.

XIX

Ben Breaker to Tom Storm

I DID not ask you for something you possess but for something which you had lost. However, since you do not wish anyone else to have it, you can keep your losings.

XX

Sam Seine to John Portreeve

DEUCE take our watcher, that fellow from Lesbos! He saw that the sea was dark in places and the surface ruffled and shouted out as though a whole shoal of tunnies or palamydes were on the way. We believed him and got our draw nets nearly round the bay. Then we began to pull and found the strain far greater than fish usually weigh. We were very hopeful and called in our neighbours, promising to give them a share if they would help us and join in the work. At last after a long pull, late in the afternoon, we got the net on the beach, and behold—a fine big camel all rotten and crawling with worms! That was my catch. I have told you of it, not to make you laugh, but to show you the sort of foul trick that fortune plays on poor wretches like me.

XXI

Dick Goodsail to Ralph Sealove

You have too much to eat or else you are mad. I hear that you are in love with one of those music girls, so infatuated that you take your catch every day to her house. My good neighbour Careful told me; you know him, the man who makes the excellent anchovy sauce from the little fish that get caught in the bag of the net. He is one of those people who have some regard for truth and would never take the slippery path of scandal. I wonder what sort of scales you play with her; diatonic, chromatic, or enharmonic?[1] According to my informant you were caught by the girl's beauty as much as by her skill. Have done with this extravagance or you will find yourself shipwrecked on land and stripped of your money. Your damsel's lodging will be for you a pirate's den, a Calydonian gulf or a Tyrrhenian sea, and the lady herself another Scylla, while there will be no 'mighty mother' for you to invoke, as Odysseus did, when she makes her second onset.

[1] There is a pun on the secondary meanings of the three words 'embrace' 'complexion' 'limb.'

XXII

Ralph Sealove to Dick Goodsail

YOUR advice to me is useless, Dick. I serve the god who with torch and bow leads his initiates on their way; and I shall never desert my girl. Beside, love is in our blood; for the lad I mean was brought to birth by the goddess of the sea. Eros, on his mother's side, is of our kin, and it is he who has pierced me to the heart. On the shore I hold my darling in my arms and fancy that Panopê or Galatea, the fairest of the daughters of Nereus, is lying by my side.

BOOK I

Letters from the Country

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I

A Fragment

WHEN I was trying some puppies the other day to see if they would be good for coursing, I frightened a hare and started her from her form. My sons let the pups go from the leash and they in a great flurry nearly caught their quarry. But the hare, trying to escape, ran up-hill and found the entrance to a burrow. The keener of the two dogs, his mouth open and expecting each moment to grip her in his jaws, went down the hole too and tried to force the creature out. In the effort he broke one of his fore feet, and so what I got was a good puppy lamed and a hare's carcass half-eaten. The profit I desired proved a delusion and I have sustained a serious loss.

II

John Stock to James Love

A curse upon him ; may he perish miserably, that miserable filthy cock. He woke me up with his noise in the middle of a delightful sleep. I was dreaming, my dear neighbour, that I was a man of rank and wealth attended by packs of servants, my stewards and bailiffs I supposed. It seemed to me too that my hands were full of rings and that I was displaying the most costly of jewels. My fingers were soft and had quite forgotten the feel of a spade. Flatterers stood at my side, as fine fellows as Gryllion or Patæcion himself. Just at that moment the people of Athens, assembled in the theatre, began to shout,—"We mean to elect you as general." The voting was half way through when lo! the villainous cock crew and the dream vanished. Still even when I woke I was pleased at first, until I remembered that the winter months are hard upon us ; and then I realized that there is not a shred of truth in dreams.

III

Leonard Lamb to Benjamin Bull

The violent hail storm has cut down my crops and we have nothing to save us from starvation. I cannot buy corn from outside for I have no money. You, I am told, have some remaining from your abundance of last year. Lend me twenty bushels and save me and my wife and children from ruin. When good crops come again and we have plenty we will repay you "full measure and more." Do not refuse a good neighbour whom bad weather has brought to this perilous plight.

IV

Charles Leaf to Frank Firman

THE land makes no return worth my labour and I have decided to give myself to sea craft and to the sea waves. Life and death are ordained for us beforehand ; no one can escape from what must be, even if he shuts himself close within a cottage. Destiny is strong and fate is inevitable ; men do not hold the scales of life, fortune is arbitrator. Before to-day some people have come to a speedy end on land, some have reached a ripe old age at sea. I know that this is so and I intend to take to seafaring, with the winds and waves as my companions. It is better to return with fresh gained wealth from the Bosporus or the Propontis rather than to stay on an upland farm in Attica and gape continually with hunger and thirst.

V

Jack Herd to Frank Folker

City money-lenders, my friend, are a plaguy nuisance. I do not know what failed me: I ought to have come to you or one of my country neighbours. I was short of money, you must know, for I wanted to buy a little place at Colonus, and at the suggestion of one of those town gentlemen, I made my way to old Moneybag's door. I found there a wrinkled old fellow with eyebrows drawn together, fumbling over some ancient worm-eaten parchments all mouldy with age. He would scarcely speak to me at first, thinking, I suppose, that words were waste of time; but when my friend said I wanted some money, he muttered "How many thousands?" He saw that I was surprised at the amount and spat scornfully, for it was plain that he was in a bad temper. But still he paid over, demanding a bond and heavy interest with the loan and a mortgage on my house. They are a plague indeed, these people who spend their time among dusty counters, their fingers crooked with reckoning. Ye gods that watch over country folk, grant that I never see a wolf —or a money-lender—again.

VI

Walter Vincent to Phœbe Brown

You avoid me, Phœbe, you avoid me continually; and that too although you have had all that my farm produces. What is there which I have that I have not given you; figs, cream cheese, a young kid, a pair of hens, every sort of delicacy? As the saying is, you have upset my apple cart altogether and compelled me to be your slave. But though I burn with desire, you pay no heed to me. So good-bye and begone. It will be hard, but I will endure your indifference.

VII

Phœbe Brown to Walter Vincent

Our neighbour's wife sent for me just now to come to her, since she was in child birth. I was just going to start with my midwife's tools when you suddenly came up and tried to turn my neck back and kiss me. You miserable old Methuselah! have done, I tell you. You come courting us young fresh girls as though you were a gallant with his first beard. Have you not been driven from the fields because you made yourself such a nuisance there? Have you not been thrust out from kitchen and fire side as an incapable old dotard? Why then these languishing looks and lover's sighs? You wretched old Pantaloon, go to your own place: if I catch you here again I shall do you some mischief.

VIII

Sydney Tree to his Wife

You pay no heed to our marriage bed, nor to our children, nor to any country occupation. You are quite the town lady now, and look with scorn on our Pan and the Nymphs whom once you used to call upon, our ladies of the flocks and the forests and the fountains. We had plenty of gods already without these new divinities you have brought. Where on my farm shall I put your Aphrodite and your Genetyllis? I know by hearsay of many others too, but there are so many of them that most of their names have slipped my memory. Yours is neither virtuous living, wife, nor sensible thinking. You try to compete with these dissolute, luxurious city dames whose complexion is a fraud and whose ways are full of wickedness. They surpass the cleverest painters in the way they daub their cheeks with carmine and rouge and white lead. If you have any sense you will stay as you were when you used to wash yourself with soap and water.

IX

Mark Meadows to Luke Lateborn

It was high summer noon. I chose a pine tree standing apart that faced the wind and caught every breeze, and beneath it took shelter from the burning heat. As I lay in the pleasant cool it occurred to me to touch a measure. I took my flute, ran my tongue along, with lips together drawing a gentle breath, and soon my ears were ravished with a pastoral melody. My goats meanwhile, enchanted somehow by the sweet sound, came from all sides and stood around me. They ceased to crop the arbutus and the asphodel and gave themselves altogether to my music, while I in their midst was like another Edonus, son of the Queen Calliope. I send you this as a piece of good news, for I like my friend to know that even my flock is musical.

X

Steve Strong to Dan Goatby

As the proper time had arrived I dug the round holes and deepened all the trenches and was prepared both to plant my young olive trees and to bring to them the running water which I get by a channel from the neighbouring valley. Suddenly a rain storm came on which lasted for three days and nights together. The rivers came down in flood from the crests of the hills, sweeping furiously onward and bringing a mass of mud with them which choked up all my trenches. The whole surface was levelled again and my work brought to nothing. Of my labour no trace remained: everywhere had the same unsightly aspect. Why should anyone toil thus in vain, expecting and hoping for the uncertain results of tillage. It would be better to turn to some other way of life. When you change your trade, men say, your luck often changes with it.

XI

Saul Goodfield to his son Winston

If you take after your father, my boy, and think as I do, you will say "good-bye" to those pale-faced, barefooted charlatans of yours who spend their days in the Academy. They do not know anything that is useful, these scientific busybodies; they cannot do anything practical. You had better turn your attention to farming: then, if you work hard, your bins will brim over with every sort of produce, your casks will run with wine, and all your house will be full of good things.

XII

Dick Olive to Harry Harvestman

The vintage is near and I am short of baskets. Lend me any you do not need and I will send them back in a little while. I for my part have an abundance of wine-jars: if you want any you are very welcome to them. In the country above all places the friendly proverb should hold—"What is mine is yours."

XIII

Phyllis Bold to her son Victor

If you were sensible, Victor, and would listen to your father and till the fields, you would now be offering to the gods wreathes of ivy and laurel and myrtle and with them such flowers as are in season. As for us, your parents, you would have cut the corn for us, pressed the wine from the grapes and filled the pails with goat's milk. But as it is, you look with scorn upon the land and farming; you prefer a soldier's crested helmet and are in love with his shield, as though you were some hired fighter from Acarnania or the Malian gulf. Nay, nay, my dear son; come back to us and embrace a life of peace. Farming is safe and free from danger; there are no ambushes here, no marshalled hosts, no companies of armed men. Choose certain safety rather than a life of constant risk, and be a comfort to us in our old age.

XIV

Tom Troup to Lily Lightgo

A CURSE upon you, Lily Lightgo! You are a bad girl and you will come to a bad end. You bewitched me with your strong drink and your flute playing and made me disappoint my comrades who had sent me here from the country. They expected me to bring them the pottery ware early this morning—it was for that I came—but I, fine fellow that I am, was beguiled by your music and slept all through the night till daylight. Begone, you wretched wench, and cozen poor fellows here with your tricks. If you annoy *me* any more, you will not get off without a good sound drubbing.

XV

Eustache Cropwell to Bill Barrel

I AM going to celebrate my son's birthday and I invite you now, friend Barrel, to dinner. Come yourself and bring your wife and your children and your hired man: yes, and bring your dog too, if you like; he is a good watchman and with his deep barking frightens off any one who has designs on the flock. He will be an honoured guest. We intend to have a merry party: we shall drink till we are half seas over, and when we have had enough we shall try a song or two: then anyone who can dance a hornpipe will come forward and amuse the company. Do not be late, friend. In a votive feast like this it is only right to sit down to dinner early.

XVI

Bill Barrel to Eustache Cropwell

Good luck to you, Eustache, and to your wife and to your children : you are a generous soul and a right good fellow. Unfortunately, I have just discovered the thief who has given me so much trouble—he stole my plough-handle and two sickles—and I am waiting for him now in my house with some of my neighbours to help me. I am not very strong, so I did not think that by myself I was capable of laying hands on him. He is a fierce looking fellow with beetling brows, his shoulders are sturdy, and he has a good fat thigh. As for me, hard work and digging have worn me to a skeleton : I have warts on my hands, and my skin is no thicker than a serpent's slough. My hired man is not well ; but my wife and children will come to your house and partake of your hospitality. I and the dog must stay at home and wait for that dirty rascal.

XVII

Simon Spring to Eli Fountain

YOU remember how I loaded my donkey with figs and dried fruit and took them into town? Well, I sold my wares to one of my customers and then a fellow came along and took me to the theatre. I had a good seat and was delighted with the different sights I saw. I cannot keep mind of most—I am not good at understanding such things or describing them—but there was one thing that struck me pretty nearly dumb. A fellow came before the audience and set down a three legged stool: he put on the stool three small plates, and under the plates concealed three small white round stones, the sort that we find on our river bank. He hid them first one under each plate; but then, somehow or other he showed them to us all under the same plate, and then he made them disappear from under the plates altogether and lo—they were in his mouth. He gulped them down his throat and drew forward the nearest three spectators and then took one stone from a man's nose, another from a man's ear, and the third from a man's head. Then, when he had got them all he made them vanish out of sight. He was indeed a light

fingered knave: I have heard tell of Eurybates of Oechalia, but he fairly beat him. I should not like such a creature on my farm. No one could catch him: he would steal all our household goods and we should never see them again.

XVIII

Mary Glen to Hester Gray

My husband has been away for these three days in town, and our labourer Sam Steady is a pure waster, an idle good-for-nothing fellow, always falling asleep. The wolf too, who lives close to us, is a nuisance: there is a bloody murderous look in his eye. He has just pounced upon the best she goat I have, Chione you know, and got away with her on the rough ground. So he is feasting now on my good milker, and I am here weeping over my loss. My husband knows nothing of it: when he does, he will string our hired man up to the nearest pine tree and will not stop devising plans until he has taken vengeance on the wolf.

XIX

George Grover to Jim Vine

I SET a trap the other day for those filthy foxes, with a piece of meat on the spring. They are always raiding our vines, not only taking single grapes, but biting whole clusters off the branches. I was told too, that the master meant to pay us a visit, and he is a hard man and severe. At Athens he is continually bringing resolutions and proposals before the Assembly, and because of his crabbed ways and flowing tongue many a man has paid a visit to jail. I was afraid anyhow I should get into trouble — for that is the sort of man my master is—so I made up my mind to catch the thieving fox and hand her over to him. But she never came near the trap. It was our little Maltese dog Plangon, whom we were rearing as a toy to please the mistress, who got caught. The greedy little creature came after the meat: and now for three days he has been lying dead and is beginning to stink. Without meaning it, I have brought trouble on trouble. What mercy will the old savage show me for this? I had better run away with what speed I can.

Good-bye to the farm and all I possess. The time has come to save my skin. It is no use waiting for something to happen: I will take precautions before anything does happen.

XX

Matthew Branch to Sam Pitcher

I LIKE every sort of harvest—the gathering in of fruits is the fair reward of labour—but above all I love to lift honey. I have just opened the hives I keep under the cliff and have taken out the new combs. The first presentation I make to the gods, the second I make to you, my friends. They are white and running over with true Attic honey, gathered from the flowers that grow on the sides of Brilessus. Accept this to-day: next year I hope to send you even more and better.

XXI

Jabez Shepherd to Ben Bullock

THAT filthy slave of mine! I might as well keep a wolf. He has made havoc among my goats, selling some and killing others for meat, and now the whole flock has gone. His belly is filled to surfeit and what is left he spends on debauchery, harp-playing and flute girls and the luxury of the perfumer's shop, while my pens are empty and all the goats have disappeared. For the moment I am keeping quiet. Not a whisper. He must not suspect anything or he would be off like a shot. But if I catch him off his guard and get him into my hands he will find himself dragging a heavy pair of fetters on his legs and will have to turn his attention to a little digging. The spade and mattock will soon make him forget his luxurious pleasures, and by painful experience he will learn how important it is to keep to temperate living in the country.

XXII

Silva Pastor to her Husband

You are a frequent visitor to town nowadays, Pastor, and you do not trouble to give even a glance to the farm. The land lies idle, widowed of her workers and I keep house alone with Bridget, and tend our children—for needs must. You somehow have suddenly turned from an elderly man into a brisk town gallant. I hear that you spend most of your time in the gay houses of Sciron and the taverns of Ceramicus where people say the worst debauchees waste their lives in idleness and self indulgence.

XXIII

Philip Press to Arthur Lark

I HAD swept the threshing floor and was putting away my winnowing-fan when the master arrived. He saw what I had done and began to praise my industry. Unfortunately just then that thieving devil Strombick—deuce take him—turned up. He noticed that I was following behind the master, so he laid hands on my blanket-coat—I had put it down while I was working—and went off with it under his arm. I lost my coat, and my comrades made a mock of me besides.

XXIV

Albert Gemmell to Lucy Riddle

You wretched girl, why are you so high and mighty! Did I not rescue you from the lame tailor's shop and bring you here and keep you, as though you were my wedded wife: and that too, without my mother knowing anything about it. You worthless little baggage, you put on airs now, squealing and making a mock of me. Enough of your proud fancies, you little misery. I will show you that your lover is your owner too. I will make you roast barley in the open fields, and then you will know by bitter experience into what trouble you have brought yourself.

XXV

Lucy Riddle to Albert Gemmell

I CAN endure everything, master, save your embraces. Last night I had not run away, nor was I hiding under the bushes as you thought: I had crept into the kneading trough and put the lid over me as a covering. I have determined to hang myself, and so I can speak out plainly, for my resolve sets me free from fear. I hate you, Gemmell. I abominate your shaggy body. I shrink from you, as from a fox. I loathe your filthy mouth and the reek of your gullet. You beast, may you die like the beast you are. Find some old blear-eyed country hag, besmeared with pitch, with one shaking tooth, and get you gone to her.

XXVI

Robert Summers to Ned Flower

I KNEW that you were an honest man, Flower, a true son of the country, bringing with you the scent of pressed olives and the smell of dust; but I never realized that you were an expert orator and could beat all those fellows in the law courts who chop talk about other people's business. Last week you brought several cases to our village head-man, and before you finished you had won them all. Good luck to your glib tongue: even the wood doves could not put you out of breath. It was a happy discovery when I came across you, and I mean to take advantage of your speech-making. I am a mark now for rascals who want to seize my property for themselves. I myself love a quiet life, although I know full well that if you do not annoy other people they often try to annoy you.

XXVII

Joe Viney to Edward Goodman

It is a hard winter this year and no one can get about. The snow covers everything; not only the hills but even the valleys are shining white. There is no work to do and yet it is a shame to sit idle. Just now I put my nose out of my cottage and scarcely had I opened the door when I saw through the snow flakes a whole company of birds, thrushes and field-fares, flying this way. So I got some bird-lime at once from the pan and smeared it over the branches of my pear trees. In a little while they settled in a cloud and soon they were hanging from every bough with their wings entangled, caught by their heads and feet. It was a pleasant sight and as your share I send you now five and twenty fat fleshy birds. It is a good thing to give to the good: he is a dirty dog who grudges his neighbours their portion.

XXVIII

Douglas Merry to Timothy Town

I HAVE never been to town; I know nothing about the city of which men speak. But I long to see this novel spectacle, people living together behind one circle of walls. I long to learn all the ways in which a city differs from country life. If, then, you should have any pretext for a journey to town, come here first and take me with you. Methinks that I am ripe for knowledge: the beard is beginning to grow thick on my chin. Who is more suitable than you to initiate me into town mysteries, seeing that you have spent so many hours within the city gates?

XXIX

Richard Leader to Norman Lovelock

THE sow whom I thought the other day was near her time has got her litter now and I have abundance of sucking pigs. Their grunting is very unpleasant, but they are good to eat, and so I offer you a pair. I cannot feed them all myself for I am short of barley, and moreover it is part of our rural equity for those who have plenty to give their friends a share. We are ourselves the kind earth's nurselings, and she teaches us simplicity and brotherly love.

XXX

Abel Looker to Francis Wildtree

Deuce take it, Wildtree: what a nuisance it is to get drunk. Last week I got drawn into a carouse—low fellows, soakers all of them, who did not care how much they drank. The glasses went round and round, and there was a fine if you shirked—you had to stand treat to them all the next day. So I drank more, I am sure, than I have ever had under my belt before, and now for three days my head has been aching, and I am still belching stale wine.

XXXI

Rose Young to her Husband

And now, I suppose, the rivers will flow backwards! A man at your time of life, young, when we have grandchildren by our son and our daughter, to be in love with a music girl! You make my blood boil; my heart seems to be breaking in pieces. I, who have lived with you for thirty years, am of no account. You fondle that wretched harlot and spend your days courting her, you and all your land food for her greed. The young gallants make a mock of you; but you do not care. O miserable old age, a loose girl's plaything!

XXXII

Algernon Putaway to Paul Leafson

You know Timon, Leafson, the son of Echecratides of Collytus. When he was rich he squandered his substance on us parasites and on courtesans, and so he was brought to penury. Then he laid aside his genial ways and became a misanthrope hating all men, like the fellow in the story who had never known pain. He lives now on his upland farm and pelts the passers-by with clods of earth. His only desire is that no man shall ever have intercourse with him again. He loathes and abhors our common humanity. As for the rest of the new made millionaires at Athens, they are meaner than anything, worse than Stingy or Grasper even. The time has come for me to migrate from town and earn my living by hard work. Please take me then on your farm as a hired labourer: I am prepared to endure any hardship if only I can fill my insatiate belly.

XXXIII

Harold Branch to Peter Stone

THERE has been a long drought; not a cloud in the sky anywhere, and we need rain. The parched clods show that the fields are thirsty. All our offerings, it seems, were useless; the God of Rain would not listen to our prayer. And yet everyone who lives in the village sacrificed of their best in rivalry, each man contributing to the utmost of his power and resources. One brought a ram, another a he-goat, another a boar: the poor man gave a round cake, he who was poorer still some grains of frankincense. As for a bull, we had none to offer; for there are not many grazing beasts among us humble folk who live on the light soil of Attica. But all our expense was in vain. God seems to be thinking of other people; He pays no heed to us here.

XXXIV

Mark Meadows to Isaac Longpurse

He was a bore, that soldier, a dreadful bore. He got here late in the afternoon and blew in —deuce take him—to my house. He began at once to weary us with his long tales and he never stopped. Talk about platoons and companies and spears and catapults and mantlets! And now it was how he had put the Thracians to flight, bringing their leader down with his javelin; now how he had run the Armenian chief through with his pike and killed him; and with it all he continually dragged in the prisoners he had taken and made parade of the women who, said he, were given him by the generals from the spoil as a special prize of valour. I filled him a good big mug and handed it to him as medicine for his silly nonsense, and he drank it up and more besides and stronger. But nothing stopped his drivel.

XXXV

Kate Gleanings to Marjory Meek

I HAD made a wreath of flowers and was going to Alopekë where my Fred lies buried, to put it on his grave. Suddenly I saw before me a troop of young daredevils who had banded together to lay hands upon me. They were in Ben Bullock's pay, I know; for ever since I lost my dear Fred he has been worrying me with offers of marriage. I always refused him, partly out of regard for my little children, partly because I still have the image of my dead hero before my eyes. But although I did not know it, a forced bridal was waiting for me and I found that a country lane this time was my marriage bed. He dragged me under the branches where the trees grew thick together and there among the flowers and leaves—But I am ashamed to tell you, dearest, what he forced me to. He is my husband now, husband by assault and battery: I was not willing, but so it was. It is very well, when you do not want a thing, never to be brought face to face with it. But if you have not that luck, there is nothing for it but to hide one's shame.

XXXVI

Samuel Fairman to William Rich

THAT Phrygian slave of mine is a dirty dog: and so I have found him on the farm. As it was on the very last day of the month when I picked him out and bought him I thought that "Newmoon" would be a suitable name for him, and that was what I called him. He seemed to be a sturdy fellow with a wide-awake look, and I led him away rejoicing. I said to myself—"he will just suit for my upland farm." But as a matter of fact he is an out and out waster. He eats four diggers' rations and sleeps like the Cretan Epimenides of whom I once heard a crack-brained lecturer prating, or like Herakles on his three night spell. What shall I do, my dear friend and comrade, pray tell me, I who have spent good money to buy such a worthless beast.

XXXVII

Betty Bright to her Mother

In the name of heaven and all the angels, mother, leave your hills and country ways for a little while, and before your last day comes visit town and see its beautiful sights. What a lot, what a lot you are missing! The feast of the Threshing-floor, the feast of the Tribesmen, the feast of the Wine-god, and grandest of all the feast of the Harvest Queen, which we are now celebrating. The first day—the Return—is over: this morning at Athens it is the Fasting: to-morrow is the Sacrifice to the Fair-Mother. If you hurry and come, early in the morning before the day star rises, you will be able to join in worship with the women of Athens. Pray come and do not delay. I beg you for my sake and my brothers'. Heaven forbid that you should end your days without having had a taste of town pleasures. It would be dreadful: no better than an animal's life. Do not be annoyed at my plain speaking, mother: it is for your own good. Everyone should be open in his dealings and above all should we make it our rule to speak the truth to our own people.

XXXVIII

Louis Straightways to Ronald Friend

I SENT my son to town to sell some wood and barley, charging him to return the same day with the money. But he has incurred the anger of some evil spirit, I imagine, and that has quite changed him and driven him out of his senses. He saw there one of those insane fellows—people call them cynic dogs because of their mad ways—and now he surpasses his teacher in the horrible things he has copied from him. He makes you shudder, he is dreadful to look at. His hair hangs long and unkempt, his looks are fierce, he goes about half-naked in a short cloak with a wallet on his shoulder and a pear-wood stick in his hand. He does not wear shoes, he does not wash, he does not work. He pays no attention to the farm or to us, his parents; he denies us outright, saying that everything is the work of nature and that the cause of birth is not a father and mother but rather a combination of atoms. It is plain too that he holds money in scorn and hates farming. As for shame he pays no regard to anything and has banished modesty from his face. Alas, poor farm, your nose has been put right out of joint by these charlatans

and their thinking shops. I blame Solon and Dracon: they thought proper to punish with death people who steal grapes but left these fellows unscathed who entrap young people and steal their wits away.

XXXIX

Oliver Oak to his Wife

I HAVE finished shearing our sheep at Decelea and I send you herewith all the sound fleeces. There were some full of scab but I gave them to the shepherd Rufus. I said he could do what he liked with them before they dropped to pieces entirely. As you have now abundance of wool, please make us garments suitable for all weather. Let us have some light and fit for summer wear, others more closely woven with plenty of substance for the winter. The thin stuff will be a protection against the sun without overheating the body: the thicker sort will ward off the cold and perhaps keep the wind out as well. Our daughter—she is ripe for marriage now—ought to help the maids with the weaving, and then, when she goes to her husband's home, she will not disgrace her parents. Besides you must remember that women who love their wool work and worship the goddess of industry spend their days in virtue and orderly living.

BOOK II

Letters from the Town

I. THE PARASITES

1. *P. Emchaser to O. Whatadish.*
2. *R. Untodine to C. Hamptooth.*
3. *L. O. Aflove to S. O. Upreek.*
4. *S. McHere to B. Rothsmell.*
5. *G. Ulpwine to A. Pintswiller.*
6. *G. Rapepress to C. Akeluck.*
7. *B. Reakabit to A. Gobble.*
8. *M. Outhy to D. I. Shlick.*
9. *T. Raylick to C. Rumby.*
10. *L. I. Kolive to T. Tablelion.*
11. *P. Pickemripe to G. Reenwonder.*
12. *S. Cratchpoll to G. Rabcloth.*
13. *S. Mokesniff to F. Fightfast.*
14. *C. Hoker to B. Redpunch.*
15. *C. Y. Clopsmaw to M. E. Atbane.*
16. *W. I. Nesink to C. Hampion-Funnell.*
17. *D. Disher to O. Savory.*
18. *P. Otlicker to P. Latelion.*
19. *I. N. Viteself to M. E. Already.*
20. *M. Unchmarvel to S. Willer.*
21. *C. Hatterwine to B. Babblecup.*
22. *S. Altcumin to P. Picklelove.*
23. *S. Tarvegut to U. N. Chewed.*
24. *O. Penmouth to S. Noretable.*
25. *A. Sniffgarlick to B. Bitter.*

26. *G. Roatflake to D. Rysmell.*
27. *C. Cooklove to D. Ishwipe.*
28. *C. Ramthrush to S. Natchpot.*
29. *L. B. O'Crook to C. Hillfight.*
30. *N. A. Kedlove to B. Oltmeal.*
31. *D. Rowncare to C. Akemouse.*
32. *D. Dynesweet to M. E. Alraven.*
33. *S. Tuffcouch to T. Ablecuff.*
34. *B. Oxhunger to F. Fightfarthing.*
35. *B. Beggarfriend to G. Rabbit.*
36. *H. A. Veaglass to R. A. Dishbed.*
37. *P. Shuck to B. Quick.*
38. *G. Natsmüller to T. Hinstarve.*
39. *T. Win to W. Wiseman.*
40. *F. Latthroat to P. Souplion.*
41. *A. Ll. Green to J. Awbone.*
42. *S. Lavebelly to A. Soupguzzle.*

I

P. Emchaser to O. Whatadish

THE shadow on the sun-dial has not reached noon yet and I am so sharp set by hunger that there is a good chance of my fading quite away. Well, Whatadish, we must think of a plan; or, better still, get a crowbar and a rope. Suppose we pull down the pillar that holds this miserable time-machine, or else turn the pointer this way so that it will reach the hours quicker. Would not that be a trick worthy of the Old one himself! As things are, I am dry and parched for lack of food. Our patron never takes his place at table until his servant runs in and tells him it is full noon. We need some such device as this to beguile and upset his orderly ways. He was brought up by a cross, frowning old pedagogue and he has none of a young man's fancies. He is a regular Pussyfoot and Sobersides, as dry as dust, and never lets his stomach take its fill before the fixed time.

II

R. Untodine to C. Hamptooth

LATE yesterday afternoon I happened to meet young Sir George—old Trueman's son, you know. He shook hands warmly and reproached me for not coming round more often. After a little badinage he said—"My dear fellow, when you have had your Turkish bath come to my house and bring Jenny Nightingale with you; she is an old friend of mine, and lodges somewhere near the Museum: but anyhow you know her address. I have arranged a very choice menu: sliced sturgeon and some bottles of old Mendesian, real nectar you will say when you taste it." With that he went off and I ran to Jenny to give her the invitation. Well, I nearly got myself into a pretty mess. She had had some experience, it seems, of our young friend and had found him a coarse fellow and stingy when it came to paying. All this was quite lately you must know, so when she heard his name she got into a tantrum, snatched the kettle off the stove and made to drench me with it. The water was boiling and I only just jumped back in time; as it was, it missed me by inches. So it always happens. We cheer ourselves with vain hopes, but our pleasures are far less than the buffets we endure.

III

L. O. Aflove to S. O. Upreek

It is a length of rope that I want. Before very long you will see me with my neck in a halter. I cannot endure this continual cuffing and the drunken jokes of our hosts—may they come to a bad end! But, on the other hand, I cannot control my filthy, gluttonous belly. It is always asking for more and wants not only to be satisfied but to be pampered. My head will not stand this knockabout business any longer, and one of my eyes has been pretty well put out of action by the painful blows I have to bear. Oh what a horrible life! What indignities we are forced to endure because of our greedy insatiate appetites! I have made up my mind to enjoy one more elaborate dinner and then to have done with existence. An easy death, I think, will be better than a life of pain.

IV

S. McHere to B. Rothsmell

Oh dear, oh dear, oh dear! What a day yesterday was. I wonder whether it was a god from the machine or some kind angel who saved me! I was within an ace of joining the majority when I got away from the party. Had not Dr Healall seen me as I lay half dead—I was practically a corpse already—and told his pupils to take me up and carry me home, nothing could have saved me from dying, and no one would have known of my end. As it was he brought me to his house, gave me an emetic, opened a vein, and let me pints of blood. Oh dear! How those profiteers had treated me. They made me drink to excess and forced me to eat more than my belly could hold. They stood round me, and one thrust in a sausage, another pushed a huge slice of fish into my mouth, another mixed a draught, not of wine, but mustard, vinegar and sauce, and poured it in as though I were a cask. I filled the doctor's pots and basins with my vomit: he said himself he did not understand where and how I could have held such a mass of stuff. Well, since I know the danger now and have only been saved by the kind protection of

heaven, I intend to turn to honest work. I shall go to the Piraeus and earn my keep as a dock labourer. Better to live safe and sure, even though you feed on herbs and barley-meal, than to feast on game and made dishes expecting every day the approach of death.

V

G. Ulpwine to A. Pintswiller

At nine o'clock to-night bring your flute and your cymbals and meet me at the Willow Tree in Golden Alley. When we have arranged things we will go down town and lay hands on Jenny Noble and take her off to our young patron Scattercash. He has been madly in love with her for many a long day and has spent tons of money to no purpose. She knows that he is young and desperately in love, so she puts on airs and plays the prude. The more she gets from him the more she wants, and says she will not surrender till he gives her an estate as well as money. The time has come then to take her by force, if she makes her usual resistance. Two stout fellows like we are should be able to carry her away, however loud she squeals. When the master hears about it and sees how well our night-attack has prospered he will give us a reward, fine clothes and a bag of sovereigns fresh from the mint. Moreover we shall be able henceforth to walk into his house at our ease and sit down to table without hindrance. It may be that he will regard us now as friends instead of parasites. Those who do not wait to be called on to render a service are usually considered not as flatterers but as true comrades.

VI

G. Rapepress to C. Akeluck

I AM ruined, look you, ruined completely. Yesterday I was a fine fellow; to-day, as you see, I have only these torn filthy rags to hide my nakedness. That dirty dog, Pat O'Leary, has stripped me bare. I had a purse full of money, you know; but by his clever tricks with the dice he has emptied it of my last shilling and my last penny. I could have cut my losses and got away safe with most, but in the excitement of the game I persisted and went on until I had lost everything. He challenged me even to stake the clothes I was wearing; and I did; and I lost them—even down to my shirt. So where am I to go now! The cruel north wind is blowing through me as sharp as a knife. Perhaps I had better make my way to the gymnasium outside the walls. One of the young gallants there may take pity on me and give me some clothes, or else I will find a shelter near the bath furnace and warm my miserable self at the fire. When you have not much on, a good blaze takes the place of a greatcoat and a blanket.

VII

B. Reakabit to A. Gobble

YESTERDAY three of us parasites, I and Sam Sparrow and Doggy Brown, went to the barber's and had a close crop and then took a bath together at The Cave. Afterwards—it was then about eleven o'clock—we set off, as fast as we could go, for young Merryboy's country place at the Cross Roads. He welcomed us heartily, for he likes a joke and enjoys throwing his money about, and we for our part tried our utmost to amuse him and his guests. We did some knock-a-bout business and sang some clever humorous songs full of ingenious jokes and charming witticisms. The company were enjoying themselves hugely when his surly old curmudgeon of a guardian turned up attended by a band of servants who at once rushed upon us. Old Meanface began by hitting Merryboy over the shoulders with his stick and boxed him hard on the ears as though he were the meanest of slaves. Then, at a word from him, we had our arms twisted and bound behind our backs, and finally after a dose from his cat-o'nine tails—he gave us too many strokes for me to count—the savage old wretch dragged us off

and lodged us in gaol. Maybe we should have been handed over to the executioner, had not our friend Straightways interfered and got us released—you know him, I think; he is one of the chief members of the High Court, a charming fellow who has joined us in many a frolic. As for the other surly old wretch he was furious against us and did his best to have us haled off to the gibbet as though we were guilty of murder or sacrilege.

VIII

M. Outhy to D. I. Shlick

We are of no account, no more than the poor folk at Megara and Aegium. To-day it is all Squeaker. Everyone is singing his praise: he has the whole town in his pocket: every door flies open to him as though he were Crates himself, the great philosopher from Thebes. I think he must have got hold of some Thessalian witch or Acarnanian sorceress, to enchant our poor young friends like this. Is he possessed of any humour, pray? Does he contribute to the merriment and conviviality of any gathering? It may be, forsooth, that the Graces look upon him with especial favour that he does what he likes with people like this, while we have to be content if we have a few scraps thrown to us as though we were dogs. Perhaps however, he is no wizard but merely lucky. Among men judgment is nothing, luck everything. If you have luck on your side you can always look pleasant, and people think you a pleasant fellow too.

IX

T. Raylick to C. Rumby

I WAS very sorry, my dear fellow, to hear of the accident to your face. If the circumstances were as described to us by that girl Lily on her return from the carouse—I mean the wench who goes about with Phyllis, the harp player—it was an attack in force you had to stand, a storming party even if there were no engines or catapults. She told us that lewd effeminate rascal broke a wine cup over your head, the pieces cutting your nose and right cheek so that the blood gushed out in streams, like the water that falls from the cliffs at Geranea. Those miserable patrons of ours who sell us a bellyfull so dear, they are becoming intolerable. We buy our lives at the price of danger, and fearing death by starvation embrace the chance of a good feed whatever the risk may be.

X

L. I. Kolive to T. Tablelion

WHAT luck, what good fortune! You will ask me perhaps, my dear fellow, what I mean. I will tell you before you go any further. It was the state festival of the Brotherhoods, you know, and I was invited out to dinner to dance the Apache dance. The guests started a drinking match, and the competition would have lasted for ever had not the whole company gone off to sleep, one dropping down after the other until even the servants were under the table. I for my part began to look about me to see if there was any silver I could annex. Unfortunately it had all been put safely away while we were still sober, so I slipped my table napkin under my arm and jumped for the door, losing one of my slippers in the process. Here the napkin is, look at its value; Egyptian linen dyed at Hermione with marine purple, wonderfully fine woven and a most expensive texture. If I can sell it safely, I will take you to Tunboy's cookshop and give you a good feed. You and I have put up with drunken violence many a time together, and it is only right that you, my partner in bad luck, should have a share of this happy day.

XI

P. Pickemripe to G. Reenwonder

Praise be to the God of Gain and to the Helping Hero. I got off safe There is nothing more to fear. I had nicked a silver cup belonging to rich old Beacon, and as it was the dead of night I ran as fast as I could to get under cover. Suddenly a pack of house dogs came on my track—Molossians and fierce beasts from Crete—and surrounding me on every side began to bark furiously. I was within an ace of being torn in pieces by them, like the fellow was who insulted Artemis, and they would not have left even my fingers and toes for kind sympathisers to bury. Luckily at that moment I saw a sewer with the man-hole open, a shallow one not very deep, and into it I popped for shelter. Even as I write I am still shaking because of it and all of a tremble. When the day star appeared I noticed that the dogs had stopped barking—they were all shut up indoors by now—so I ran down to the harbour, found a boat from Sicily just starting, and sold the captain my cup for a good price. Behold me now a millionaire! My purse is full of money, and in the first flush of hope I have a hankering

to keep some toadies and parasites for my own enjoyment instead of being a parasite myself. But I know that when I have spent the money I have got I shall return to the old trade. A dog that has once learned to gnaw leather never forgets the trick.

XII

S. Cratchpoll to G. Rabcloth

I HOPE that old rogue Ranter the tragedian may lose his voice and come to a rogue's end. He had been playing in a play of Æschylus—the Escort—and by dint of extra-loud shouting had outbawled both his rivals, Judge of Cleonæ and Colt of Ambracia. To celebrate his triumph he gave a party, wearing a wreath of ivy on his head. I was invited and—oh dear—what indignities I had to endure. They daubed my head with pitch and made my eyes water with mustard sauce. The others had milk buns and sesame rolls to eat, but instead of cakes they gave me stones that had been smeared with honey to break my teeth on. That little baggage Rose—the girl who has just come here from Phenea and lives in Potter's Row—she was the sauciest of the crew. She filled a pig's bladder with blood and cracked it down on my head: it went off pop and I had a blood bath. The company split themselves with laughter loud and long, but I received no fair recompense for such treatment. A bellyfull and no more was the price of all their insults. Damn old Ranter!

I hope that he will lose next time, and always. I hate the sound of his voice, and I hereby decree that we and all our band of merry boys shall know him henceforward by the name of "Croaking Crow."

XIII

S. Mokesniff to F. Fightfast

How cruel is the god who has taken charge of my life as his own particular care! How painful the chains of poverty that ever bind me! If I cannot find anyone to invite me to dinner, there is nothing for me but to munch chervil and leeks or even pick grass and fill my belly with a drink of water from the Nine Springs. Moreover, I could endure it while I was young and vigorous, strong enough to bear insults and to submit to being knocked about. But now I am turning gray and what is left of my life is declining to old age. What remedy is there for my troubles? I had better get a good stout piece of rope and hang myself before the gates unless fortune can devise some lucky chance for me. But even if she stays the same I will not put my neck in the noose till I have enjoyed one more good dinner. It will not be long now, the famous marriage between Charito and Leocrates of which everyone is talking. It will be directly after the end of this month, and surely I shall be invited on the first day or the second. A marriage feast must have parasites to make things go merrily. Without us it would not be a festivity; it would be a gathering of swine not men.

XIV

C. Hoker to B. Redpunch

I CANNOT bear to see that wench Doll Horsebreaker using our young patron so cruelly. Gold and silver, houses and land, he lavishes everything upon her. She is scheming to set him still more on fire, and pretends to be in love with a young fellow from the Island, so that she may have him to turn to when she has gobbled up our master's fortune. I am grieved to the heart to see all the money slipping away which his father and mother left him when they died. What they got together painfully, penny by penny, he is spending in a heap on that low, common baggage. I am personally concerned too in this matter of young Master Friendly. When he first came into his property he showed us great liberality; and I see now that our prospects are none too rosy. If all our worthy patron's property gets into that girl's hands, a long good-bye to our big feeds. And Friendly, you know, is a gentleman, considerate and courteous to his parasites. When he wants to be amused he does not knock us about, but is content with a joke and song.

XV

C. Y. Clopsmaw to M. E. Atbane

HERE I am, returned in haste from Corinth to Athens. I have had enough of Eurotas and the marshes, of Lerna and the springs of Pirene. I long for our own Fair Fountain again. I did not appreciate any of their foreign luxuries and was only anxious to push off and hurry back to you. The people I saw there were surly fellows, not at all good company: much more of drunken riot than of real enjoyment. I would rather munch unripe figs and dried olives at Athens than pick up handfuls of gold with them. What nasty low tricks too they invent! They make you drink while you are slipping on greasy leather and pour you out a cup of wine—hot fiery stuff—without any water in it. For food they throw you shin bones and trotters as though you were a dog, and break their canes over your shoulders, while their idea of a joke is to give you a beating with leather thongs and all kinds of whips. I pray to our patron goddess, who guards our city, that it be granted me to live in Athens and in Athens to die. It is better to lie a corpse cast out without burial before Diomede's Gate or outside the Knights' Arch, rather than to have a share of all the wealth of Peloponnese.

XVI

W. I. Nesink to C. Hampion-Funnell

It is no concern of mine: they must do what they like and take the risk.

I could not take part in their wicked ways, even if an oracle from the oak trees of Dodona were to bid me. They are making love on the quiet to a woman whom the master of the house keeps, and things between them and her have gone as far as they can go. But they are not satisfied with the unlawful satisfaction of their lusts; they are removing the furniture from her house, one thing at a time. Perhaps for a while the business they are carrying on will go undetected, but it is certain that some day a talkative neighbour or a gossiping slave will bring everything to light. The end of their pleasures will be the torture of the fire and the knife, and then the hemlock and the prison fosse. People who indulge in reckless crime must pay a penalty proportionate to their deeds.

XVII

D. Disher to O. Savory

Yesterday, while cook was busy at the well, I slipped into the kitchen and discovered a dish of fine black puddings, a roast fowl and and a jar of pickled sprats and anchovies from Megara. I snatched them all up and hurried away, and then began to consider where I might conveniently devour them by myself. For lack of any better place I ran to the Painted Porch—none of those prating philosophers were infesting it just then—and started to enjoy the fruits of my labours. But when I looked up from the dish I saw some young fellows coming along from the gaming tables. I put the food behind me in a fright and lay on the ground to hide my plunder, while I prayed to all the saints that the dark cloud might pass by, promising them some grains of frankincense —a pretty mouldy lot—which I had picked up in the temples and stored away at home. And I was not far out in my prayer: by the grace of heaven the youths turned another way. So I hastily gobbled up all that was in my parcels and made a present of what remained from the booty—the dish and the jar to wit—to a friend of mine who keeps an eating house. He thought me a right generous fellow because of the gift, and I went my way rejoicing.

XVIII

P. Otlicker to P. Latelion

"Why those tears?" perhaps you will ask, "Whence that broken pate? How is it that this flowered coat is all torn to rags?" The reason is that yesterday I was the winner at dice—I wish I had not been. It was no use for a poor weakling to match himself against such sturdy young ruffians. I had scooped up all the pool, they were left quite dry; and so they all came for me. Some of them used their fists, others had stones, others tore my coat to ribbons. I held tight to the money, resolved to die rather than surrender my winnings. For a time I stood out manfully, enduring a rain of blows, while they tried to twist my fingers back. I was like a Spartan at the altar of Pallas and they did the beating. But it was not Sparta where this happened but Athens—and of all the gamblers in Athens these fellows were the most damnable rogues. At last I gave in and let the cursed fellows take what they wanted. They went through my pockets and stole all I had. But I thought it better to live without my purse than to die a moneyed man.

XIX

I. N. Viteself to M. E. Already

Those grandees—the people I mean who contract to teach our young men—are little or nothing different from ordinary folk, though they make such a song about goodness and virtue. What a lot, what a lot you missed the other day at Scambon's party when he was celebrating his daughter's birthday. He had invited a large company, the best people of Athens in the way of birth and fortune, and thought proper to grace his table with the presence of some of these philosopher gentry. In the forefront was the stoic Trueman, a dirty old fellow with unkempt hair and a long goatee, his face more wrinkled than a leather pouch. Lawson too, the peripatetic, was there, a rather charming person in appearance, with a fine pair of bushy whiskers. Then came the epicurean Godbold, his hair all curly and carefully dressed and a full beard of which he was plainly very proud. The fourth was the pythagorean Starlife, the "world-renowned" as they all called him. His cheeks were very pale, his hair hung down in long ringlets from the top of his head almost to his waist, his beard was long and pointed, his nose hooked, and his mouth

tight closed, the firm compression of his lips signifying the secrecy proper to his sect. Last of all the cynic Sturdy, pushing aside the crowd, came in with a rush. He had a huge oak staff to lean upon, studded with brass nails as close as the twigs on a tree, while his wallet gaped wide, ready for all the scraps. The rest of the company from the beginning to the end of the feast behaved in orderly fashion, one the same as the others. But the philosophers, as the cups went round and the party got loud and merry, indulged each in some different trick. The stoic, who was very old and very replete, lay down full length and snored. The pythagorean, breaking the rule of silence, begun to hum some of the golden sayings to a musical accompaniment. Our friend Lawson, remembering that the peripatetic teaching defines happiness as depending not merely on mind and body but on external causes as well, took a big handful of hors d'œuvres, and called for another helping of entrée. As for the epicurean, he half closed his eyes and with a melting, languorous look, tried to take in his arms the girl who was playing the cither. "This," quoth he, "is the philosophical way to calm the flesh, the true concentration of pleasure." Meanwhile the cynic, in accordance with his doctrine of "nothing matters," stooped

down to the floor and letting his cloak fall among the refuse satisfied his necessities. Then, pulling the music girl to him, he was prepared to embrace her in the sight of all the company, saying that nature was the prime cause of generation. Not a word or a thought for us parasites. Those of us who had been invited to give our show were not even asked to amuse the company, although the harpist Phœbiades and a troup of actors with Sannyrion and Philistides were waiting to play their part. We were quite forgotten; no one took any notice of us; the philosophers with their absurd antics got all the applause.

XX

M. Unchmarvel to S. Willer

You puff yourself up without reason and are full of arrogance, strutting about as though you were Solomon himself. Every day, too, you carry off a good portion from the breakfast table, filling your bag with a big parcel of scraps. You behave just like that usher Begson used to do, quoting a line of Homer—"Eat and drink and take away"—because it fitted so nicely the way he snatched his food. You miserable fellow, stop it, I say, and have done with your brag. If not, before you know where you are you will find yourself stripped bare and flung into the street.

XXI

C. Hatterwine to B. Babblecup

The other day I had drunk more than I should have done and made fun of my young master's foster-father Sparkish. It is perhaps because of the complaints that he has poured into his ears that the patron has become now so very stingy and mean with his presents. He used to give me every feast-day a tunic or a cloak or a blanket-coat, but this week, though it was Christmas time, he only sent me a pair of new shoes by the hand of his valet Quicktoe. The fellow made a fuss about it too, and wanted a tip for bringing them. I am so annoyed that I could bite my chattering tongue out. I see too late what a mistake I made. When a flood of words pours out without common-sense to guide them, your tongue is bound to go astray and get you into trouble.

XXII

S. Altcumin to P. Picklelove

I do not care for you and your whispered threats. The slanders you invent are ineffectual. The Malian captain, who for the moment is providing me with food, is a simple honest gentleman and very far from feeling jealous over courtesans. The other day at table the talk turned to that topic, and he spoke in the strongest language about those who indulged in such folly. "A respectable married woman," he said, "should keep the house and behave with propriety, but a courtesan ought to be accessible and open to all who wish. As we use a bath and the bath-implements as common property, though they may belong to one man, so it should be with the women who enrol themselves for a life of pleasure." You may be sure then that your slandering talk will carry no weight and you had better bite your lips, like people do when they pass by the statue of The Silent Hero, and tremble lest you get yourself into trouble. The captain is not one of your saucy Athenian lads: he is an old soldier and a man of valour. With him your flattering ways and scandalous talk will be useless. A man who does not like slander is obviously no friend to slanderers.

XXIII

S. Tarvegut to U. N. Chewed

I SHOULD like to go to one of those fellows who put out their boards by the temple of Iacchus and profess to interpret dreams. I would pay him these two shillings—here they are, you see, in my hand—if he could explain the sight I saw in my sleep. Indeed I may as well confide to you, my friend, this strange and incredible vision. I dreamed that I was a comely youth, not such a one as you meet every day but Ganymede himself, the son of Tros, the paragon of Ilium, the well-beloved. I had a shepherd's staff and a shepherd's flute, my head was covered with a Phrygian cap, and I was tending my flock on Mount Ida. Suddenly there swooped down upon me a great eagle with curved talons, glaring eyes, and hooked beak. He lifted me up by his claws from the rock where I was sitting, and carried me high into the air until in hasty flight he brought me to the heavenly realm. But just as I was going to touch the Gate of the Seasons a thunderbolt struck me and hurled me down. The bird too was no longer the great eagle who flies in the sky but a stinking vulture, and I was once again the S. Tarvegut

you know, as naked as when I was born, stripped as though for a bath or wrestling-match. The shock of my fall naturally awoke me, and I am still worried about this uncanny dream. I should like expert advice as to its meaning if I can only find someone who really knows and moreover will tell me the truth.

XXIV

O. Penmouth to S. Noretable

I HAVE never been to Corinth but once. I soon discovered how offensive rich people are there and how miserable are the poor. It was mid-day, past the usual bathing hour, when I saw some young men—bright merry fellows too—gathered in a little crowd near the Acropolis, where there are no houses and where the sellers of fruit and bread are wont to congregate. They were stooping to the ground and one would pick up the lupine husks; another go carefully through the nutshells to see if anything eatable had been left; a third scraped the pomegranate skins which we in Athens call "sidia," hoping to be able to find a few seeds still, while others even gathered up the scraps of bread that had fallen and had been trodden under foot, and devoured them greedily. That is what your "Gateway of the Peloponnese" is like, your fine city lying between its two seas. It is charming enough to look at and well supplied with luxuries, but the people who live there are neither charming nor loving nor loveable. It is true that men

say the Queen of Love, when she rose from the sea at Cythera, chose to come first to Corinth's hill, but I imagine that it is only women there whom Love protects: for men, Hunger is the staple divinity.

XXV

A Sniffgarlick to B. Bitter

Good heavens, what a business I have had with soap and soda, cleaning off the sticki-ness of the broth that was thrown over me yesterday. It was not so much the insult that stung me as the difference between myself and my assailant. I am the son of Anthemion who was the richest man of his time in Athens; and my mother Axiothea was descended from the great Megacles. The fellow who did this to me had a nobody for his father and his mother was a foreigner, a woman from Scythia, I believe, or else from Colchis, bought for a slave in the hiring market as some of his acquaintances tell me. To-day I am brought down low: my father's property has gone and I am content if I can get a bare sustenance. But Dosiades, ye gods, enraptures the assembly with his speeches, is counted among those who decide all issues in the law courts and holds the reins of the people—the same people, look you, who once imprisoned Miltiades the victor of Marathon and banished Aristides the Just. What hurts me most of all is the loss of my proper name. My family knew me as Polybius: my ill fortune now has changed all that and forced me to answer to what my fellow-parasites call me—"Sniffgarlick."

XXVI

G. Roatflake to D. Rysmell

You ought to know the reason why the girls jeer at me and why that old slave woman ended up with downright abuse—"Get out of the house, you interfering chatterbox." They have got a mystery play on hand, a much greater secret than any you see at Eleusis, and they want to keep us, who know all about it, in the dark still; or perhaps they even suppose that we do not believe all that we have heard. For myself, I know the plot of the whole comedy, and before very long I shall inform the master. Even a dog barks to warn its owner against thieves, and I do not mean to behave worse than a dumb beast. There is a fancy man trying his games in this house, a young fellow from Elis, one of those Olympic charmers. Every day there is a stream of letters passing between him and our patron's wife, bouquets somewhat the worse for wear, and nibbled fruit. Those fiends of girls know all about it, and so does that tombstone of an old woman—every one in the house calls her Bogey, for she will do anything and put up with anything. I do not mean to hold my tongue any longer. I will show myself a

friend and not a mere parasite. Besides, I thirst for vengeance on them. I know, I know what will happen. As soon as things come to light, the girls will find themselves in fetters, the lover will be impaled, and that filthy woman will pay the proper penalty of lasciviousness. Unless indeed Lysicles is even more complaisant than the hunchback Poliager, who only holds his wife's lovers to ransom, and lets them go free as soon as they have paid him his price.

XXVII

C. Cooklove to D. Ishwipe

Oh, what schemes and plottings! Those damned ogres of women are in league with the mistress, and Master Bright does not know a word about it. Five months after they were married that woman gave birth to a male child. They put some tokens round its neck and handed it over to our hired labourer Sureman to take to the top of Mount Parnes. It was a bad business, but for a time I was obliged to keep it dark. Even now for the moment I am not saying anything, but if they annoy me in the least and call me "flatterer" or "parasite" or any other of the insulting words they use, the master shall be told of all that has happened.

XXVIII

C. Ramthrush to S. Natchpot

OLD Judge is so stupid and behind the times that he sent his son to school with a philosopher. He chose that stern, unsmiling old fellow who teaches in the Painted Porch, thinking that he was the most suitable person to guide his son's footsteps, and that he would learn from him all kinds of tricky arguments and become a glib debater. The lad has indeed taken pattern by the master; but he has preferred to copy, not his theories, but his conduct and way of life. He saw that his tutor in the day time wore a stern look and frowned severely on his young charges, but that at night he pulled his cape over his head and spent his time in gay houses. So he thought he would do the same; and for a week now he has been over head and ears in love with Jenny Finch of Potters' Row. He is on fire to have her; but the young lady is a particular friend of mine—indeed I am her acknowledged lover—and seeing that the lad is quite infatuated, she is holding out, and has promised me that she will not surrender until I give the word; for she has invested me with full powers in these matters. Give the sweet

girl your blessing, dear Lady of the Streets; she behaves not like a kept mistress but like a true friend. The presents that the lad is continually making her keep me snug and comfortable. If, as time goes on, he becomes more lavish still, when he marries an heiress there will be nothing to stop me getting Jenny away and making her my wife. It is only fair that she should be my partner for life seeing that she provides me with a livelihood.

XXIX

L. B. O'Crook to C. Hillfight

Hurrah, hurrah! the boat from Istria lying at the quay side now has brought a real treasure to Athens. He is a wonder, that merchant on board her: he makes our richest men, for all their gifts, seem stingy and avaricious, so lavish is he with his purse. He has sent for every single parasite in town, and besides us for the most expensive courtesans and the prettiest music-girls. As for the stage folk, to put it briefly, he has invited the whole crowd. Moreover it is not his father's property he is spending, but his own fair gains. He loves the sound of harp and flute, his conversation is full of grace and charm, and he is never violent to anybody. He is, besides, of most attractive appearance: upon his face dance all the fairies of spring, and allurement, you might well say, sits upon his lips. He is a good sportsman and a witty talker.

> "As quoth the poet—'From his lip
> The muses will their nectar sip.'"

For if you come from Athens it is just as well to talk sometimes in literary jargon: at Athens everyone has a smattering of letters.

XXX

N. A. Kedlove to B. Oltmeal

Do you see what that cursed barber down the street has done to me; the prating gossip I mean with the tame ravens, who has Italian mirrors in his windows and plays all sorts of tunes with his razors. When I went in to be shaved he welcomed me with a smile and made me sit down on a high chair. Then he put a nice new wrapper round me and drawing his razor very carefully down my cheek removed the thick hair. But all the time he was playing me a dirty trick. Without my noticing it, he was shaving not my whole cheek but only patches, so that in some parts my face was left quite clean and in other parts it was still covered with hair. I never noticed anything and went off, as usual, uninvited to dinner with Oldcash. As soon as the company there saw me they almost died with laughing. I did not see the joke until one of them came forward, caught hold of a tuft that had been left, and pulled it hard. I snatched up a knife in a rage and cut that piece close at once; and I mean now to get a good big stick and smash that damned fellow on the head. He never provides me with a meal, but he had the impudence to play a joke upon me that even my keepers would not do.

XXXI

D. Rowncare to C. Akemouse

The other day I saw a maiden carrying the sacred basket in the procession. She was as slim as a young gazelle, tall and fair, with rosy arms and pointed fingers. Her eyes were as bright as the light in heaven and her cheeks as smooth as marble. My heart was on fire: I forgot who I was and was fain to run after her and kiss her on the mouth. But suddenly I remembered my position and standing still would have been content to touch her foot-prints with my lips. Alas for my infatuation! No longer do I crave for beans or pulse or lupines. I am full fed with love and with a longing for what I shall never get. Come all together here and stone me to death before I am quite consumed by my passion. The pile of stones shall be for me a lover's tomb.

XXXII

D. Dynesweet to M. E. Alraven

Ye blessed gods, be favourable and have mercy upon me! Oh what a danger I have just escaped! Those damnable people at the dinner meant to throw a cauldron of boiling water over me. I saw what they were at and jumped out of the way. But they did not care: they threw it all the same and it caught the page Bathyllus who was serving the wine. It took the skin off his head, hair and all, and his back is one mass of blisters. I wonder who was my guardian angel. Perhaps the Saving Princes protected me from those fiery streams as once they rescued Simonides from the banquet at Crannon.

XXXIII

S. Tuffcouch to T. Ablecuff

I TOLD Mnesilochus of Pæania about his wife's loose conduct. He ought to have cross-questioned the jade and found out her goings-on, but the precious fellow agreed to believe her on her mere oath. My lady took him to the Fair Well at Eleusis, swore that she was innocent, and behold—"the charge is dismissed!" She had no difficulty in persuading him and now he has forgotten all his suspicions. As for me I am prepared to allow any one who wishes to take an oyster-shell and cut out my silly tongue.

XXXIV

B. Oxhunger to F. Fightfarthing

I HAVE been fairly friendly with Farmer Lark for some time and have often enjoyed a laugh with him, for he has more appreciation of wit and humour than most country folk. Seeing this I thought it would be a godsend for me to escape from town life and go to the country to live with a nice, inoffensive, hard-working farmer who did not depend on sharp practice in the law court or tricks in the market-place, but waited patiently for the earth to give him her fruits. So I made up my mind and joined my old friend. I put on country clothes and with a goatskin on my shoulders and a spade in my hand I looked a real hedger and ditcher. At first the work was just play and quite bearable: indeed I thought I had gained by escaping from the insolence of rich bullies and their cuffings and the devilish tricks they played me over my food. But when it became an everyday business and a matter of fixed routine, I could not stand the life at all. It was nothing but ploughing and clearing stony ground and digging trenches and setting young trees, so that I repented bitterly of my folly and longed for town again. Well I returned and

found after my long absence that I was neither a welcome nor an attractive guest—"What a nasty rough boor!"—people cried, and my rich friends shut their doors in my face. Hunger soon began to knock rat-a-tat on my belly, and being left high and dry I was so hard up for a meal that I joined a band of Megarian foot-pads who lie in wait for travellers by the Scironian rocks. I get my livelihood now as an outlaw without working. But I do not know how long I shall escape detection. I do not feel very happy about this change of occupation. Such alterations usually end not in long life but in sudden damnation.

XXXV

B. Beggarfriend to G. Rabbit

Plainspeech, the dramatist, saw how annoyed I was at the drunken insults I have to endure at parties. He took me aside and started by advising me to give up a mode of life that brings a man at last to ignominy. Then he gave me a brief voice-test and said he would take me into his company and so I could make a living. He told me the part I was to have, and said that in the next production I should put on a footman's livery and play a servant. It was rather late in life to change my ways and mode of life, and at first I was reluctant and showed myself a poor pupil. But there was no alternative for me, and so I learnt my rôle, and now after long study and rehearsal I am ready to appear with the rest of the company. I want you to get our friends together and start the applause. Then even if we make an unforeseen slip the youthful wits about town will not get a chance of hooting and hissing, for the sound of your applause will drown their noisy jeers.

XXXVI

H. A. Veaglass to R. A. Dishbed

THE people who mutilated the statues of Hermes or divulged the mysteries of Eleusis never came so near to losing their lives as I did when I fell into the hands of that abominable woman Plainfight. She knew that her husband was enamoured of the girl from Ionia who throws balls into the air and juggles with torches, and she suspected that I was their go-between in the business. So with the help of her servants she got hold of me and shut me up in fetters for one night. The next day she took me to her father, surly old Goodfame, who is now the chief man in the Council. Even the High Court regards him with awe. But when the gods wish to save a man they pluck him even from the edge of the abyss, and so it was they snatched me from the jaws of the three-headed dog who guards, men say, the gates of hell. That terrible old man had scarcely had time to bring my case before the Council, when he was seized with a fever and in three days was dead. He is lying now stark and cold and his people are preparing for the funeral, while I ran off as

fast as my legs could carry me. Now I am safe. Hermes, son of Maia, has not led me down to the realm of shades. My own feet and stout heart have found for me the path to freedom.

XXXVII

P. Shuck to B. Quick

Hard, hard is our fate. The others were served with tripe and sow's paunch and liver that melted in your mouth; our ration was pea soup. They drank old Chalybonian, we had bottle-washings as sour as vinegar. Ye guardian saints and directing angels, I pray you for some diversion of this unfair lot. You should not keep some folk in continual prosperity and make others only familiar with hunger. All this is due to the compelling hand of fate, and she does not deal fairly with us who suffer always from hard times and an empty purse.

XXXVIII

G. Natsmüller to T. Hinstarve

THE hopes I had of young Judge have proved a delusion. I thought that when his father died he would start throwing his money about in handfuls and that he would enjoy himself with banquets and dissipation in company with us parasites and those courtesans who, by their beauty, hold the first place when a long purse has to be emptied. Well, his father has gone beneath the daisies, but yet he only has one meal a day, and that he takes when the sun declines and is near to its setting. Moreover, he never has anything expensive to eat: just bread, which he buys in the market, and for condiment, if he means to make a feast day of it, some home-grown figs and cheap olives. My fine expectations are a failure, and I do not know what to do. If the man who should feed you himself wants some one to feed him, what is to become of the person whom by rights he ought to feed. For one starveling to be the parasite of another starveling only means a double disaster.

XXXIX

T. Win to W. Wiseman

They put on the table one of those lovely puddings that are called after Gelo, the Sicilian tyrant. I felt my mouth water at the mere sight of it and made ready to gobble it up. But I had to wait. First of all they must arrange the garnishings on the dish, pistachio-nuts and dates and shelled almonds. I scowled at each and every one, for I was ready, my mouth wide open, to fling myself on the pudding itself. Then they started wasting more time; they would nibble a nut and pass the wine round again just to make more delay. It seemed indeed as if they were holding up my appetite on purpose. One of them took a toothpick and began cleaning his teeth: another threw himself back on the couch and apparently thought more of going to sleep than of eating his dinner. The others meanwhile chatted one to the other, doing anything except proceed to the enjoyment of that dear delicious pudding. At last some kind saint, I imagine, took pity on my parched throat, and seeing how I longed for it, allowed me to satisfy my desires. But by that time, I must tell you, I was so exasperated by my long waiting that I hardly appreciated the dainty.

XL

F. Latthroat to P. Souplion

I NEVER had to face such weather in Attica! The winds buffeted furiously, now blowing in turn, now sweeping down all together. The snow fell thick and fast, covering not merely the surface of the ground, but forming into high drifts. It was all one could do to open the door and look out into the alley. I had neither wood nor charcoal. How could I? Where was I to get them? The cold pierced the very marrow of my bones. So I made up my mind to try one of Odysseus' tricks and ran off to the public-bath furnace. But I found my fellow parasites already huddled there, and they could not give me room; for they were vexed by the same fiend Poverty that torments me. I saw that I should never get in and hurried off to the private bath house that belongs to Thrasyllus. Luckily that was unoccupied, and for three pence I purchased the bath-man's sympathy and got a good warm. The snow was followed by a frost, and soon the very stones were fastened together by ice as the water between them congealed. But at last the biting cold abated, and now the kindly sun allows me to walk abroad at ease again and enjoy a leisurely stroll.

XLI

A. Ll. Green to J. Awbone

Eternal damnation to all politicians and law-makers.

XLII

S. Lavebelly to A. Soupguzzle

To be knocked about by the man who finds your food, even though it be an unholy terror, is yet a thing that can be borne. Because of our wicked appetite we surrender ourselves once for all to those who choose to insult us. It is far more painful when the rest of the company join in: worst of all when even the more saucy of the footmen take a hand. If I were to add how the servant girls giggle and jeer and make a mock of our misfortunes, then in Homer's words—"Hard, yea most hard, the fate that I endure." I remember a line I heard my old schoolmaster recite—"No god more cruel than almighty Zeus." In very truth the gods who preside thus over our lives are for us spirits of destruction. I have to endure pain and danger, and even the meanest make my lot a subject of mockery.

BOOK II

Letters from the Town

II. THE COURTESANS

1. *Phryne to Praxiteles.*
2. *Bacchis to Hyperides.*
3. *Bacchis to Phryne.*
4. *Bacchis to Myrrhina.*
5. *Thaïs to Thessala.*
6. *Thaïs to Euthydemus.*
7. *Simalion to Petalë.*
8. *Petalë to Simalion.*
9. *Myrrhina to Nikippë.*
10. *Menekleides to Euthycles.*
11. *Leaena to Philodemus.*
12. *A fragment.*
13. *Megara to Bacchis.*
14. *Philumena to Crito.*
15. *Lamia to Demetrius.*
16. *Leontion to Lamia.*
17. *Glycera to Bacchis.*
18. *Menander to Glycera.*
19. *Glycera to Menander.*

I

Phryne to Praxiteles

You need not be afraid, even if you have set up a statue of your mistress in a temple precinct. The work is a masterpiece and no one has ever seen a thing more beautiful made by men's hands. I stand between your own Aphrodite and your own Eros. Do not be jealous of the honour paid me: it is Praxiteles that people praise as they look at me, and it is because I am your workmanship that the men of Thespiae have thought me not unworthy of a place between two divinities. One more favour I still want. Come yourself to me, and in this enclosure we will fall into one another's arms. The gods will not be shocked: they are our own creation. Good-bye.

II

Bacchis to Hyperides

ALL we ladies have to thank you, each and everyone as much as Phryne. She was the only one of us brought to trial—O what a dirty dog that Euthias must be!—but we are all exposed to the same danger. If we do not get money from our lovers when we ask for it, or if when we do get it we are brought to trial for impiety by the donor, then the best thing for us will be to give up this sort of life, cease to trouble ourselves any more, and refuse men our company.

But, thanks to you, there is no need to find fault with our profession to-day; we can take an honest pride in it. Euthias was a mean rogue in his love affairs, but Hyperides has shown himself a true gentleman. Good luck to you, friend, and may your courtesy be rewarded. You have saved a fair lady for your own good, and you will find us ready to take her place when you want us. If you would only publish your speech for Phryne, then we courtesans would set up a gold statue of our golden orator wherever in Greece you chose.

III

Bacchis to Phryne

Even my sympathy for you in your danger, dear, was not so great as the joy that I now share with you. You have got rid of a rogue and found an honest gentleman as lover. Your trial, I think, has brought you good luck, for the case has made you famous not only in Athens but through all Greece. Euthias will be sufficiently punished by the loss of your society. I imagine that he was goaded on by temper, and through his innate want of breeding overstepped the limits of a lover's jealousy. You may be sure that at this moment he is more in love with you than is Hyperides. Your advocate, it is plain, counts on your gratitude. He expects to be cossetted and play the part of a favoured lover. But Euthias has been made all the keener by losing his case, and you may expect from him prayers and entreaties and money in plenty. But do not condemn us other courtesans, my dear, by listening to his supplications or make Hyperides seem to have been wrong. You must not believe people when they say that he could not have won the day unless he had torn your robe open and showed the jury your breasts. It was his pleading that made the action appropriate and successful.

IV

Bacchis to Myrrhina

I PRAY to our lady Venus that you may never get a better lover than the one you have now. I hope that your darling Euthias will stay with you all your life. You miserable girl; what folly is this to be infatuated with such a creature. But perhaps your beauty makes you confident! The man, forsooth, who scorned Phryne will be faithful to Myrrhina! Or maybe you thought that you would pay out Hyperides thus for his indifference. Well, *he* has a mistress now worthy of himself, and you have a lover who just suits *you*. Ask him for a pound and you will find that you have set fire to the dockyards and broken every law there is. At any rate you may be sure that we detest you, all of us, who set some value on the courtesies of love.

V

Thaïs to Thessala

I NEVER thought to quarrel with Euxippë after all our long friendship. I do not reproach her with the services I have done her since her return from Samos, but she might remember my behaviour to Pamphilus. You know yourself what sums the young fellow offered me, but just because I fancied that he had once been with her, I refused to have anything to do with him. A fine return she has made me in her desire to please her new friend, that detestable creature, Megara. I and Megara have a long standing quarrel—it started over Captain Strato—and I was not surprised that she should abuse me. The Harvest Festival came along, and all we girls, as usual, went to the all-night service. I was surprised there at Euxippë's offensive behaviour. She began by giggling with Megara and mocking me in an ill-natured way, and then she sang some lines of a song about an inconstant lover of mine. I did not mind that so much: but at last she was brazen faced enough to make jokes about the rouge and carmine I had on. I thought to myself—"Poor creature, you must be badly off not to possess a looking-glass"—for plainly

if she had seen herself with her face like a beet-root, she would not have made unpleasant remarks about my appearance. Of course I pay no attention to a pair of monkeys like Megara and Euxippë; my business is to please my lovers, not them. I have told you this that you may not blame me afterwards. I intend to pay them out; and it will not be with jokes or insulting words but with something that will hurt them much more. But I must not boast: accept my homage, Nemesis.

VI

Thaïs to Euthydemus

Ever since you started studying philosophy you have put on airs, with your eyebrows raised to the top of your head. You pace solemnly to the Academy in your gown with a book in your hand and pass by my house as though you had never seen it before. You are mad, Euthydemus; or perhaps you do not know what sort of man that supercilious teacher of yours is, for all his wonderful discourses. Why, he has been pestering me—you cannot imagine how long—for a rendezvous, and he is infatuated over Herpyllis, Megara's maid. I never would have anything to do with him in the past, for I preferred to sleep in your arms rather than have all the gold that your professors could offer. But since it seems that he is turning you away from my society I will accept his proposals, and if you like I will show you that your misogynist tutor requires a little more than the usual pleasures of a night to satisfy *him*. His talk is just stuff and nonsense, you silly boy, meant to take in young fools. Do you suppose that a professor is any different from a courtesan?

Only so far anyhow as regards our methods of persuasion; the end that we both propose to ourselves is the same—money. But how much better and more religious are we! We do not deny the existence of the gods; we believe our lovers' oaths of fidelity. So far from allowing men to have intercourse with their sisters, or mothers, we prohibit them another man's wife. Perhaps we do not know about the origin of clouds and the nature of atoms, but for all that we are just as good as your professors. I have talked to many of them and spent hours with them. No one in a courtesan's company dreams of tyranny or stirs up faction in the commonwealth: no, he takes a pint of neat wine for his breakfast and stays in bed till nine or ten o'clock. As for teaching young men, we do that quite as well as they. Compare a courtesan like Aspasia with a sophist like Socrates, and consider which produced the better pupils: the woman trained Pericles, the man Critias. My own love, Euthydemus, put aside this displeasing folly—such eyes as yours should never look stern—and come to your faithful mistress as you used to come from the Lyceum, wiping the sweat off your brow. We will have a bottle or two first and then we will discourse one to another on the purpose of life—which

is pleasure. You will find that I am philosopher enough to convince you. Fortune does not give us long to live: do not waste your time heedlessly on riddles and nonsense. Good-bye.

VII

Simalion to Petalë

If you think that it is a pleasant thing or that your friends are envious of you because I come so often to your door and lament my fate to your servants as they go with messages to my more lucky rivals, then you are justified in treating me with scorn. But you must know—I realize that I am speaking against my own interests—I still have for you such an affection as few of your lovers would feel if they were thus despised. I hoped that the wine I drank three evenings ago with Euphronios would console me—I drank enough of it—and that it would drive away the anguish of my nights. But far from it. It so kindled my desire for you that I burst out weeping and sobbing. The kinder folk pitied; the others made a jest of me. I have only one thing to comfort me in my distress, and that is fading quickly, the wreath I mean which in answer to my reproaches you tore from your hair at the table and flung to the ground, as though you hated anything I had sent you. Well, if it gives you pleasure, enjoy my sufferings: talk about them even, if you wish, to those who to-day are happier than myself, although soon,

if they feel as I do, they too will know sorrow. But pray to Aphrodite that she may not punish you for your cruelty. Others would have used threats and abuse in writing to you: I prefer prayers and entreaties. I am so miserable in my love for you, Petalë, and I fear that if things get worse I shall follow the example of those whose love-plaints have brought them to an untimely end.

VIII

Petalë to Simalion

I wish that a courtesan could keep house with tears. I should be well off then; for I have plenty of them from you. But as things stand, it is money that I need, and clothes and furniture and servants. On that the whole business of my life depends. I did not inherit an estate at Myrrhinus, nor do I possess a silver mine. I have only the money I earn and such miserable tear-stained presents as my silly lovers make me. Look at my pitiable plight to-day after a year with you. My hair is all rough and brittle; I have not set eyes on pomade for twelve months. All I have to wear is a few ragged old Tarentine shawls. Heaven help me! I am ashamed for my friends to see me. How do you suppose I am to live if I stay with you? You are very tearful, I know. But that will soon be over. As for me, if I do not find some one to provide for me, I shall die of honourable starvation. I wonder at you; your tears seem to me very unconvincing. You say, my friend, that you love me and long for your mistress' company: you cannot live without her, you pretend. Well, in the name of Lady Aphrodite, I ask

you—are there no silver cups in your house which you could pawn? Could you not get me your mother's jewels or borrow some money from your father? How I envy Philotis! The Graces look upon her with kinder eyes than they do on me. What a lover she has! Her Menekleides gives her money every day. That is better than sighing and sobbing. You are not a lover at all, you are a wet blanket. You send me wreaths of flowers as though I were an untimely grave, and spend your nights, according to your account, in weeping. If you have a present to offer me, then you may come and there will be no occasion for tears. If not, it will be yourself and not me that you will be tormenting.

IX

Myrrhina to Nikippë

DIPHILUS never thinks of me now: he has gone over to that dirty jade Thessala. Up to the time of the Feast of Adonis he used to serenade me in the evening and often came here to pass the night. Even then he would put on airs and behave like a favoured suitor, and when he was drunk he had to be taken home by Helix who, being in love with my girl Herpyllis, is usually lounging about here. But now it is plain that he means to have no more to do with me. For four days running he has been drinking hard in Lysis' garden together with Thessala and that fellow Strongylion—curse him—who out of spite against me has procured him his new mistress. I have written him letters and sent my maids to him with messages, but it is all no use. Indeed I think that it has made him the more infatuated, and now he regards me with scorn. The only thing left for me to do is to lock my door and keep him out if, to annoy her, he should come to pass the night with me. Sometimes pride is broken by contempt. If that does not succeed I shall have to use a stronger remedy, such as one tries in serious cases. It would be too

monstrous for me to lose his money and be a laughing stock for that Thessala as well. You have a love potion, you say, that you have often tried on young men. That is the sort of thing I want, something that will clear away his drunken fit and cure him of his infatuation. I will propose to make it up with him and shed a few plausible tears—"Nemesis will surely overtake you," I will write, "if you desert a woman who loves you like I do"; and then I will invent a few more lies. He will have pity on me, of course, and think that I am madly in love with him, and will graciously pay me a visit. "It is only right to remember the past," he will say, "and our old friendship"—puffing himself up, the nasty beast. Helix will help me: Herpyllis will see to him. Love potions, I know, are uncertain things and sometimes bring sudden death. But I do not care. He must either live for me or die for Thessala.

X

Menecleides to Euthycles

SHE is gone, my Bacchis, my beautiful: she has passed away and left me nothing but tears —tears and the bitter-sweet memory of our love. Never, never will the day come when I shall forget Bacchis. Ah what sympathy was hers! "A plea for frail women"; it would not be amiss to make that the title of her life-story. If all the beauties of every land came together and set up her statue in the temple of Aphrodite or the Graces, methinks they would do a seemly deed. The common gossip of women's faithlessness and mischief, that they look only for gain and fall to the highest bidder, that they are the cause of every sort of trouble to those who come their way, all this in herself she has shown to be an unjust libel: so effective a contrast was her character to the scandal of the mob. You remember that fellow Medeus who turned up here from Syria, how attentive he was to her and the elaborate preparations he made to get her away from me—"Eunuchs shall be yours," he said; "and handmaidens, and all the pomp of the East." But she never listened to his advances: she was satisfied to sleep under my poor blanket, worn and humble

though it was: the meagre presents which I could make sufficed her, and she spurned the costly gifts which the foreign magnate offered. Yes, and how scornfully she rejected that Egyptian merchant, though he would have given her all the money she could want. Nothing can ever surpass her—of that I am sure. But she is gone; she has left me, and now she will be lying alone, my Bacchis. Dear God, how unjust it is! I ought to be lying by her side this hour; but I am alive and putting out my hand to food, and soon I shall be talking with my friends again, while she——. Ah, never more will she look at me with a smile in those bright eyes, never more will her gracious love gladden my nights with the sweetest of all pleasures. To think how soft her voice was, how fair her eyes; what siren charms dwelt ever in her company, how sweet and pure the nectar that her kisses distilled. The very spirit of persuasion sat upon her lips: it was a magic girdle that clasped her breast, and all the charms of love were hers to greet love's queen. But now they are gone, the pretty songs that she would sing at our toasts: gone too the lyre which her ivory fingers used to strike. She whom all the graces loved is lying dead, dust and ashes and a dull stone. And yet such a wench as Megara

lives, though she has stripped poor Theagenes so bare of all his fine estate that now he has snatched up cloak and shield and gone to join the army. But Bacchis, who gave her lover all her heart, is dead.

Dear Euthycles, I am easier now that I have poured out all my grief. Even to talk and write about her seems a pleasure now, for nothing is left me but her memory. Farewell.

XI

Leaena to Philodemus

I saw your bride at the mysteries in her fine summer dress. By our Lady Venus, I pity you, my poor friend. What an experience it must be to sleep with a tortoise like her! Her complexion too is as red as a beet-root; and her long curls! they do not match her top-knot, my lad. As for the powder on her cheeks; well—! And yet they abuse us courtesans for decking ourselves out. She had a big chain round her neck—she ought to be on a chain always and not a gold one either—and her face was just like a bad dream. And her feet!—the size of them, and the flatness and the clumsiness. Oh dear, what a business it must be to take her in your arms with her things off. I thought too that her breath was not oversweet. Good lady Nemesis, I would rather have a toad for bed-fellow.

XII

Fête Galante. A Fragment

Last week Melissa invited us to her lover's place, saying that she owed a sacrifice to the Nymphs. His farm is about three miles from town. Most of it is meadow land or garden ground; but close to the house there is a little corn growing. The rest consists of cypress plantations and groves of myrtle: it is a lovers' retreat, my dear, rather than a proper farm.

We had plenty of fun on our way there, playing tricks upon our lovers and upon one another, and being greeted with rude jests by the passers-by. That saucy knave, Nicias, for example, turned up from somewhere and called out to us—"Where are you off to, all of you together: whose farm are you thinking of gobbling up? I envy the place you are going to—and what about the fig-leaves?" But Petalë gave him his own back; she told him off properly; and finally he spat on the ground, said we were a lot of dirty wenches, and went off—to the deuce, I hope. Then we started plucking wild parsley and gathering catkins and anemones, until all on a sudden we found ourselves there. We never thought we should

have done the journey so quickly; but our fun made us not notice the distance.

So we began at once to prepare for the sacrifice. A little way from the farm buildings there is a rock, its summit shaded by plane trees and laurel bushes and with myrtle thickets growing on either side. All along the surface of the stone run strands of ivy clinging in close tendrils, and from above falls a trickle of clear water. Just where the rock projects some statues have been placed, Nymphs and a Pan stooping forward as though he were spying upon them. We built a rough altar facing them, and laying some sticks upon it to make a blaze, we began by sacrificing a white hen. Then we poured out some mead and lit a cake of incense in the fire and prayed earnestly to the Nymphs—but just as earnestly to Lady Aphrodite as well—that we might get a good bag of lovers.

By that time we were ready ourselves for dinner. "Let us go home," said Melissa, "and have a merry feast." "Nay," I said—"by the Nymphs and Pan there—see how amorous he looks—this is the best place, and he will rejoice to watch us drinking. How fresh and dewy is the ground under the myrtle branches, and how gay with wanton flowers. I would rather lie down on this grass than on

our softest rugs and coverlets. I am sure a party here will be more delightful than anything in town, for we shall enjoy the air and the charm of the country." "Yes, yes," they all cried, "you are right"; and we began at once to break off branches of smilax and myrtle, and putting our cloaks over them, to make an impromptu couch. The ground was already carpeted with soft clover and trefoil, and all round about wild hyacinths and bright coloured daisies delighted the eye. Nightingales, perched on tender green branches, kept up a soft sweet twittering, and the water falling lightly from the rock like drops of sweat from a man's brow made a gentle sound that was quite in harmony with our summer picnic. The wine was not the wine of the country but an Italian vintage —you told me you bought six jars of it at Eleusis—very sweet and plenty of it. We had eggs, soft boiled like very tender meat, and slices of young kid and home bred chickens and various sorts of milk-puddings, some thickened with honey and some boiled in a saucepan—beestings I think they call them —and vermicelli and all the other dainties which the country in summer provides.

Then the wine cups began to go round merrily. Our only limit was not more than three toasts for any one person. And as usually

happens when there is no compulsion at a party, we made up for it by keeping steadily at work, and though the cups were small the tipple was passing from one to another all the time. Megara's girl Harmony was there with her flute and Simmichë sang us some love songs to the music, so that the Nymphs by the fountain rejoiced to hear. As for Pan, when Plangon got up and danced and swayed herself about, he almost leaped down from the rock to embrace her. Mox vehementer nos concitavit musica, mentemque mero irriguam habebamus : nosti quid dicam. Amatorum manus demulcebamus digitorum articulis leniter inflexis et inter potum ludebamus. Resupinata aliqua amatorem basiavit mammasque permisit contrectare et quasi aversata aperte impegit inguini coxendicem. Iamque assurgebant nobis mulieribus cupidines, viris autem illa quae habent : furtim digressae igitur haud procul densum frutetum invenimus, idoneum crapulae illius cubiculum. Hic a compotatione respiravimus in lectis temere effusae. Quodque erat maxime ridendum, omnes nos idem agere inter nos invicem dissimulabamus. Ab altera autem parte viri frutetum intrabant.

So after our loving sport was done we fell to drinking again, and even if the Nymphs did not seem to look on us as kindly as before,

Pan at least was all smiles. One of us made herself a wreath with bits of myrtle joined together and cried, "How does it suit me, my dear?" Another came up with violets in her hand and said, "How sweet they smell!" Another with a "Look" drew some unripe apples from her gown and showed them to us. Another started humming a tune, and another still, like a timid girl, picked the leaves from a tree and put them into her mouth.

Next came a second meal; game this time, that had been caught in the farmer's nets and partridges and bunches of sweet new grapes and hare pasties. The second course was oysters and mussels brought from town, and native cockles and wild strawberries and fleshy artichokes with honey and vinegar sauce, and, most popular of all, lettuces and parsley. You never saw such lovely lettuces. The garden was quite close and we all of us started calling to the servants—"Pull me that one"—"No, please give me that"—"Not that one, the other one." Some of them were long with big leaves, others small and close and curly with a reddish tinge on them, the sort that Aphrodite is said to love. All this fresh green stuff stimulated our appetite, and we drank this time so lustily that we made no further pretence of modesty or concealment. The wine sent

us quite off our heads. At last the cock next door—hateful bird—started crowing and brought our revels to an end.

Well now, you have had a full account of our banquet even if you could not come yourself—it was a sumptuous affair, worthy of a company of lovers. I made up my mind to send you an exact account and I have done my very best. If you really are not well, make haste and get better. But if you are staying indoors because you expect your lover to come, you are very foolish. Good-bye.

XIII

Megara to Bacchis

You are the only girl who has a lover, and you are so fond of him that you cannot leave him even for a minute. Dear Aphrodite, what bad taste! Glycera asked you to come to her sacrificial feast weeks ago — it was at the festival of Dionysus that she gave us the invitation—and yet you were not there. It was because of *him*, I suppose, you could not bear to visit your old friends. You have become a virtuous woman and are devoted to your lover. I congratulate you on your respectability—we are just wanton harlots. Ah well, Philo once had a stick made of fig wood, you know! By Our Lady I am angry with you, I am indeed. We were all there — Thessala, Moscharion, Thaïs, Anthrakion, Petalë, Thryallis, Myrrhina, Chrysion, Euxippë. As for Philumena, although she is just married and has a jealous husband, as soon as she had seen her dear to bed, she came to us: she was late, but she came. You were the only one who had an Adonis to keep warm. I suppose you were afraid that some Persephonë would get hold of him if you, his

Aphrodite, left him by himself. Oh, what a party we had!—I mean to annoy you if I can—how perfectly charming it was! Songs, jokes, drinking till cock-crow, perfumes, garlands, and a delicious dessert. Our banqueting hall was under the shade of the laurel trees, and the only thing we lacked was you—nothing else. We have often had a drinking party before, but seldom such a pleasant one as this. Quod vero maximam nobis peperit voluptatem, gravis quaedam contentio fuit inter Thryallidem et Myrrhinam de natibus, utra pulchriores et teneriores monstrare posset. Primum Myrrhina soluto cingulo (bombycinum erat indusium) per hoc tremulos, tanquam adipem vel recens coagulatum lac, lumbos agitabat, respectans retro ad motus clunium. Leviter autem veluti patrans quiddam Venereum nonnihil suspirabat, ut ego, ita me Venus, obstupuerim. Non tamen animum despondit Thryallis, immo protervitatis gloriam ei praeripuit: "Non enim 'inquit' ego per vela certabo neque tergiversando, sed tanquam in gymnico certamine: nullos enim amat praetextus certamen." Itque exuit indusium et paululum obliquans lumbos "En adspice colorem" inquit "quam exactus, O Myrrhina, quam intemeratus, quam purus!

purpuram natium hancce vide et commissuram in femoribus, et ipsa neque nimis turgida neque macilenta, gelasinosque in extremitatibus. Sed non tremunt profecto ut Myrrhinae" inquit simul subridens. Tum vibrationem natium tantam excitavit totasque supra lumbos huc illuc tanquam fluentes circumagitavit ut plausum tolleremus omnes et victoriam Thryallidi adjudicaremus. Fuerunt etiam coxarum comparationes et de mammillis certamina. Philumenae quidem ventri nulla suum comparare ausa est; nondum enim pepererat et succulenta fuit.

We spent the night abusing our present lovers and hoping for new ones—a fresh amour is always the sweetest—until at last the wine was done and it was time to come home. We had several more drinks on the way back, and when we got to the Chestnut Tree in Golden Alley near Menephro's house, we started all over again with Deximachus. Thaïs is madly in love with him, and with good reason: the young fellow has just inherited from his rich father.

So we forgive you this time for your refusal. We are going to have another party for the feast of Adonis. It will be at Collyttus in the

house of Thessala's lover, for she has a special cult for Aphrodite's darling. See that you come and bring with you a basket of herbs and an image of the god and your own pet Adonis too. Our lovers are to be of the party.

Good-bye.

XIV

Philumena to Crito

WHY worry yourself with long letters? I want fifty pounds; I do not want words. If you love me—pay up. If you love your money better—don't bother. Good-bye.

XV

Lamia to Demetrius Poliorcetes

YOU are responsible for my freedom of speech. Though you are so mighty a king you allow me who am but a courtesan to write to you, and think it no shame, taking me in your arms, to take in your hand my letter as well. When I hear your voice in the street, sire, and see you with your bodyguard and troops and counsellors and diadems, by Our Lady, I am filled with fear and confusion and turn my eyes away as though you were the sun who might blind me. Then in very truth you seem to be the great Demetrius, the Stormer of Cities. How fierce and warlike are your looks then! I cannot believe myself. I say—"Is it with him that you sleep, Lamia? Is it to him that you play all night long? How can such a man as he send for you and compare you with a royal courtesan like Gnathaena?" I am all bewildered and have no answer to make to myself. I can only pray to see you at my house again; and when you come I bow down humbly before you. But when you take me in your arms and kiss me I say to myself

just the opposite—"Is this the Stormer of Cities, the Captain of hosts, the terror of Macedonia and Greece and Thrace? By Our Lady, I will storm him to-night with my flute and see what he does to me then."

But now I must wait for three days, and then, sire, I beg you to dine with me. I am offering my yearly sacrifice to Aphrodite and make a point each year of beating my own record. I shall welcome you in true lover's fashion and as sumptuously as I can, if you grant me the means. I have not done anything to disgrace your favour since that sacred night, although you graciously bade me then to dispose of my person as I wished. I have disposed of it in all honour and have had nothing to do with other men. I shall never use a courtesan's tricks again, sire, nor lie to you as other women do. By Artemis, since that night it is but seldom that anyone has sent for me: people feel afraid, sire, of your fashion of storming strong places. Love is swift to come and swift to fly; hope gives him wings, but when hope is fulfilled his feathers fall away. So it is a courtesan's chief resource to defer the full fruition of joy and by expectation still to keep a hold on her lovers. We

have to pretend now that we are busy, now that we are unwell, now that we have our houses to see to. Songs and music, dances and dinners, all serve as reasons to defer our favours which in any case so soon lose their first freshness. Men are too eager for enjoyment: it is our part to kindle their love by putting obstacles in the way and make them afraid that something will occur to check their present happiness. Such tricks and wiles as these, sire, I might be able to use on other men, but not with you. You take such pride in me that you display me openly and boast to other woman that I am the fairest of them all. By the dear Muses, I could not bear to deceive you. I am not so insensible as that. If I were to give up everything, even my life, for your pleasure, I should think that I had not given enough. But by Artemis, I am sure that our entertainment will be talked about not merely in Therippides' house—that is where I am going to prepare for you my Aphrodite's banquet—but in all Athens and in all Greece. It will annoy those detestable Spartans most of all. They had to play the fox at Ephesus and now, to pretend that they are men again in their wilderness of a country on the hillside of Taygetus, they

will start talking scandal about our dinners and, prating of their Lycurgus, will find fault with your decent mode of life. Well, let them talk if they will, sire: do you remember to keep that day for me, any hour that you like: whichever you prefer will be the best. Good-bye.

XVI

Leontion to Lamia

There is nothing more disgusting, I think, than an old man who is just beginning to grow young again. Oh that Epicurus! what a life he leads me with his abuse and his suspicions and his endless letters and his chasing me out of his "Garden." By Our Lady, if he were Adonis himself, instead of being nearly eighty, I could scarcely endure the lousy old wretch. He is continually fancying he is ill, and his body is covered all over with white wool instead of hair. How long must one endure this philosopher! Let him keep to his physical dogmas and his crooked "Rules" and leave me to be physically my own mistress. He makes me sick always messing me about. A nice one he is to storm a stronghold, very different from your Demetrius, Lamia. One cannot live in peace because of him: he fancies himself another Socrates with his talk and sarcastic ways, Pythocles is an Alcibiades of sorts, and I am supposed to play the part of Xanthippë I must run away; I will go to the

ends of the world rather than have any more of his interminable letters.

To-day he has ventured to do something that is quite too monstrous and unbearable, and that is why I am writing to you now to ask for your advice. You know that handsome young fellow Timarchus of Cephisia. I do not deny that I have been friendly with him for a long time: indeed—I always tell you the truth, dear—it was from him I took my first love-lesson, and he had me when I was living next door. Ever since then he has always been sending me all sorts of nice things; dresses, jewellery, men and women servants, Indian pages and Indian waiting women. I need say no more.

Now my old man wants to have every particle of my charms and would like no one to have a taste before himself. So he says to me, "Shut him out"—a lover, mind you, like Timarchus—"Do not let him come near you." And he abuses him in the most dreadful language you can imagine: not at all like an Athenian gentleman or a philosopher, more like a Cappadocian slave on his first coming to Greece. Well, if Athens were full of people like Epicurus, I would not give a farthing for

all of them compared with one of Timarchus' arms or even one of his fingers. What do you say, Lamia? Is not that true? Is it not right? Pray, pray do not say to yourself, "Ah, but he is a philosopher *and* he is famous *and* he has many friends." Let him take all that I have and go and teach some one else. His fame is no attraction for me, it is Timarchus that I want and I pray to Demeter to give him to me.

The poor boy has been forced to abandon everything on my account, the Lyceum, his sports, his comrades, his clubs, and now he lives with the "Master" and has to flatter the "Master" and repeat the "Master's" windy sermons. And then the old ogre says, "You must not poach on my preserves: leave Leontion alone." As though Timarchus could not more justly say, "Do not you poach on mine." Timarchus, although he is young and lusty, puts up with his old rival, who is a late-comer; Epicurus cannot stand the other, who has the stronger claim.

Pray tell me, Lamia, I beseech you, what I should do. By the mysteries and my hope of escape from all this trouble, when I think of being parted from Timarchus I turn cold all

over, my hands and feet go wet, and my heart stops beating. Pray let me come and stay with you a few days and I will make him realize what a treasure he had when I was in his house. He is not likely to bear things patiently I know: he will send ambassadors to me at once, Metrodorus and Hermarchus and Polyaenus. How often, think you, have I not gone to him privately and said, "What are you thinking about, Epicurus? Do you not know how Timocrates makes fun of you because of this in the assembly, in the theatre, and with the other philosophers?" But I can do nothing with him. Love makes him shameless. Well, I will be as shameless as he is and I shall not let my Timarchus go. Good-bye.

XVII

Glycera to Bacchis

My Menander has made up his mind to come to Corinth for the Isthmian games. I do not like it. You know yourself how hard it is to lose an ardent lover, even for a day. But I could not stop him, for he does not often go away from my side. I do not know whether I ought to entrust him to your care during his visit or not. I want you to look after him, but when I think about it I feel a little jealous; for he knows that we are friends. I am not so much afraid of you, my dear—you are an honest woman, whatever your mode of life: I am afraid of him. He has a wonderfully amorous nature and such a dainty morsel as Bacchis would tempt even a Puritan. Sometimes I fancy that he is making the journey as much for the sake of meeting you as of seeing the games: but I am not sure. Perhaps you will blame me for my suspicions, but you must excuse professional jealousy, my dear. I should think it no slight blow if I lost a lover like Menander. Besides, if there should be any difference between us to vex him, I shall

have to suffer. I shall be put in a play and soundly rated by a Mr Moneybags or a Grandpa Stingy. So if he returns to me in the same mind as he went, I shall be very grateful to you. Good-bye.

XVIII

Menander to Glycera

By the Eleusinian goddesses and by their mysteries, whereon I have often sworn to you, I and you in their presence together, Glycera, I want no further glory and I never mean to leave you. That vow I now repeat and put down here in writing. What pleasure could I have without you? What greater glory than your affection? Your loving care and your loving ways will make old age for me seem youth. May we live our youth and our old age together; and, by heaven, may we die together too, Glycera, realizing that together we are leaving life behind, so that neither of us in the nether world may feel a pang of jealousy to think that the survivor is tasting fresh joys above. As for me I could never taste joy again if you were dead; no happiness would be possible for me.

But something has occurred since you have been waiting in Athens for the Harvest festival of Demeter and I have been playing the invalid at Piraeus — it is only one of my usual turns, as you know: my enemies would

call it a fit of slackness and self-indulgence—and I hasten to send you an account of it.

I have received a letter from Ptolemy, King of Egypt, in which he uses the most earnest entreaties and makes the most royal promises. He wants me and Philemon to come to his court and he offers us, as the saying goes, all that we could wish for on earth. He tells me that he has sent a letter to Philemon as well; and indeed Philemon has just sent it to me—it is nothing like so complimentary as mine and not being written to Menander, it is much less effusive.

But Philemon must look after himself and come to his own decision. I do not need to wait for advice: you, Glycera, are my judgment-seat, my court of Areopagus, and my high tribunal; by Our Lady, you are all the world to me and ever will be.

I am sending you the King's letter with this so as not to bore you by making you read the same thing twice over, in his words and in mine. I want to tell you, however, the answer I have decided to give him. To cross the sea and go to his distant Kingdom of Egypt—by the twelve gods—I cannot think of it for a moment. Even if Egypt were in Aegina here

close by, even then I would never dream of giving up my kingship in your love to live without my Glycera among a crowd of Egyptians. For me Egypt would be a crowded wilderness. It is more pleasant and more safe to serve in your court than to depend upon any satrap or king. With them freedom is dangerous, flattery despicable, and fortune treacherous. As for their cups and beakers and golden vases and all the invidious prizes of a court, I would not take them in exchange for our yearly feast of pitchers and your company there, or for the festival of the Wine-Press in the theatre and our exercises in the Lyceum and the sacred grove of Academe. No indeed, I swear it by Dionysus and his wreaths of Bacchic ivy. I would far rather be crowned with them, while my Glycera sits and looks on in the theatre, than have any diadem that Ptolemy could offer. Where in Egypt shall I see a people assembling to give their votes? Or a throng of citizens enjoying their freedom? Or judges with wreaths of ivy on their sacred heads? Where shall I find our roped enclosure for the final verdict, and our Pot-feast, our Ceramicus, our market-place, and our jury courts. There will be no glorious Acropolis there, no sacred

goddesses, no mysteries. I shall leave behind me our neighbours Salamis and Psyttalea, the straits and Marathon, Greece, Ionia and the islands of the Cyclades—for they are all bound up in Athens.

Why should I give up this—and Glycera with it,—to go to Egypt for the sake of money, gold and silver. With whom could I share my wealth, if Glycera were far away across the sea? Without her I must be a pauper. If I were to hear that she had transferred the love I worship to some other man, would not all my treasure turn to ashes? When I die I shall take away my sorrows with me, but my money will be left for any one strong enough to seize it. A fine thing forsooth to live with Ptolemy and his satraps and such like big guns! Their friendship is uncertain and their enmity is dangerous.

If my Glycera is vexed with me I take her in my arms and give her a kiss: if she is still annoyed I use a little more force: if she persists in her anger I burst into tears. She cannot endure to see me suffer and at once begs me to stop. She is my queen, although she has no soldiers or bodyguards or retinue: and I am everything to her.

It is a fine wonderful thing to see the Nile, men say. But would it not be fine to see the Euphrates and the Danube, and the mighty Thermodon and the Tigris and the Halys? If I am going to visit all the great rivers of the world my life will be spent on the water, and I shall never see Glycera again. The Nile is a fine river; but it is full of crocodiles and you cannot go near it because of the danger that lurks in every eddy. I should like to be buried, messire Ptolemy, in a grave in my own country. I want to be crowned always with Athenian ivy, to sing my song to Dionysus every year by my own hearth, to take part in the mystic rites, and to bring out a new play each annual performance. I want to be happy, to laugh, and to fear, and to enter for the competition and to win. Let Philemon go to Egypt and enjoy the success that I might win there. He has not got a Glycera: perhaps he did not deserve such a treasure. As for you, my little Glycera, I beg you to saddle your mule as soon as the Harvest Feast is over and come on wings to me. Forgive me, Demeter; but I have never known your festival seem so long and so tiresome.

XIX

Glycera to Menander

I READ the King's letter, which you sent me, at once. By Our Lady, in whose temple I am now praying, it filled me with happiness. I was in an ecstasy of delight and my companions noticed it. My mother was with me and my other sister Euphronion and a girl friend of mine whom you know. She has often dined at your house and once you praised the way she spoke—"That is true Attic Greek" you said; but you said it as though you were half afraid to praise her, so that I could not help smiling and gave you an especially loving kiss. Don't you remember, Menander?

They saw by my face and eyes that I was unusually glad and they said, "Dear Glycera, what is this great good-fortune of yours? You suddenly look quite different; mind, body and everything. You are all in a rapture of joy and your face shines with happiness." "Ptolemy, King of Egypt has sent for my Menander," I replied, "offering him practically half his kingdom." I raised my voice and spoke louder than usual so that all the women there might

hear, and as I said it I turned over the letter with the royal seal and rustled the sheets in my hand.

"Would you like him to leave you then?" they cried. That was not it, Menander. By our ladies, even if an ox, as the saying goes, were to find a voice to tell me, I would never believe that Menander would leave his Glycera behind in Athens, to be monarch of all the treasures of Egypt. He would not and he could not. By his letter, as I read it, the King knows this quite well—you have told him about me, I expect—and with Egyptian humour he is trying to poke a little gentle fun at you. I am glad that the story of our love has found its way to him in Egypt, and in any case he must realize that he is seeking the impossible when he wants Athens to cross the water to him. What would Athens be without Menander? What would Menander be without Glycera? I get his masks ready for him and put on his costumes and stand in the wings squeezing my fingers and trembling with anxiety until I hear the house applaud. Then, by Our Lady, I breath again and fling my arms about my poet and clasp his head to my breast.

No, what gave me pleasure then, as I told my friends, Menander, was to know that Glycera is not the only person who is in love with you. Fame has spread the renown of your genius abroad, and kings across the sea desire your presence. Egypt and the Nile, the headland of Proteus and the light-house of Pharos are all in suspense waiting to see Menander and to hear the characters in his plays, his misers and lovers, his superstitious and suspicious people. Well, they may hear them perhaps ; but they will not see Menander himself unless they come to Glycera at Athens and see my happiness, my own glorious Menander day and night by my side.

Not but what if you have any yearning for the good things there and desire, if nothing else, at least to see Egypt and its wonders—the pyramids, the musical statues, the famous labyrinth, and all the other things to which time and workmanship have given value—I beg you, Menander, do not make me a reason for not going. I do not want the Athenians to dislike me, and they are already counting up the bushels of corn which the King is sending them on your account.

In heaven's name go, and good luck be with

you: may the breezes be favourable and the sky propitious. I shall not leave your side. Do not think that I mean that. I could not even if I wished. I shall say good-bye to my mother and my sisters and turn into a sailor-woman to make the voyage with you. I am a good sailor, I know, and when the weather is rough and you feel ill, I will comfort you in your sickness and bring you safe to Egypt. I will be an Ariadne—not the one in the story-book—for though you are not Dionysus himself, you are his servant and his priest. There is no fear of my being left behind in Naxos or any other lonely shore, weeping and cursing your perfidy. We have finished with people like Theseus and the treacherous crimes of the past. I have nothing to fear anywhere, in Athens or Piraeus or Egypt. There is no place that will not welcome such a perfect love as ours. If we lived upon a rock, I know that our affection would make it a temple of Aphrodite.

I am sure too that you have no desire at all for gold or superfluity of riches: you stake your happiness on me and on your plays. And yet your kinsmen, as you know, your family, your friends, everyone pretty well everywhere

seeks to satisfy his needs: men want to make money and become rich.

You will never blame me for anything great or small; that I know. In the past you may have yielded to passion and to your love for me. To-day it is a matter of considered judgment. And that I value more, Menander, for I have always feared the insecurity of a merely passionate love. Passion is a violent thing but its bonds are soon shattered. It is when you join reflection to love that its strength becomes unbreakable: pleasure and security then go together. You will feel as I do here, for you have often counselled and instructed me in these matters.

But though you will not blame or chide me, I fear these Attic wasps here, who will begin soon to buzz about me when I walk abroad, hissing—"She has robbed our Athens of Ptolemy's gold." So I beg you, Menander, to wait a while and not reply to the king at once. Consider it a little more and wait until we have talked it over with your friends, Theophrastus and Epicurus. Perhaps they and you will take a different view. Better still, let us offer sacrifice and see what the omens say; whether it will be best for us to

go to Egypt or to remain here. Let us send to Delphi too and consult the oracle: the god is our ancestral helper. Then we can excuse ourselves in either case on the ground of his advice. And there is something better yet that I will do. I have a woman who has just come from Phrygia and is very skilled in these matters: she can tell the future by the position of the stars and she can call up the dead. As she says, you need not believe mere words; you can see her actually at work. I will send across for her. They tell me though, that she always has to perform a purifying ceremony first and get certain particular animals for sacrifice. Also she must have pure frankincense, and stalks of styrax, and moon cakes, and wild chestnut leaves: so I expect you will be back from Piraeus before she is here.

Tell me definitely how long it will be before you are able to see Glycera again, and then I will hurry to you and have this Phrygian woman ready at once. But if you are going to try and manage me and your farm and your affairs at Piraeus and Munychia all by yourself, I know it will be too much for you. By heaven, I could not do it myself and you cannot either, for you and I make now but one whole.

As for your kings, if all the monarchs in the world send for you, I have more kingly power with you than any of them. I have always found you a conscientious lover and mindful of your plighted oath. So try, my loveliest, to come back to Athens soon. Then, if you change your mind about going to Ptolemy, you will have your plays ready and be able to pick out those that will be most likely to please the king and suit his taste in drama—you know it is not of a very democratic sort. There is the "Thaïs," and "The man who got himself disliked," and "Thrasyleon," and "The Litigants," and "She who is slapped," and "The Sicyonian", and others as well.

But what am I saying? Am I not a bold, audacious girl to make my choice among Menander's plays when I am only an amateur? But it is my love for you that makes me wise and gives me knowledge. You have told me that a woman of parts soon learns from her lovers. And if the little Cupids take a hand in the teaching, by Our Lady, it would be a shame for us not to be a credit and learn our lesson quickly. In any case I beg you, Menander, to get the play ready where I come in. Then, even if I do not go with you, your play will

take me across the sea to Ptolemy and the king will realize the force of love, when he sees it set down in writing, even though you have left the reality behind in Athens.

But you will not leave your love behind, you may be sure of that. Until you return to me from Piraeus, I shall be learning how to steer a ship and keep a look-out, so that I may sail with you, and with my own hands ensure you a safe voyage, if you decide upon the journey. Whatever you decide I pray to heaven that it profit us both, and I hope that my Phrygian woman will read the future better than did your heroine in "The Prophetess." Good-bye.

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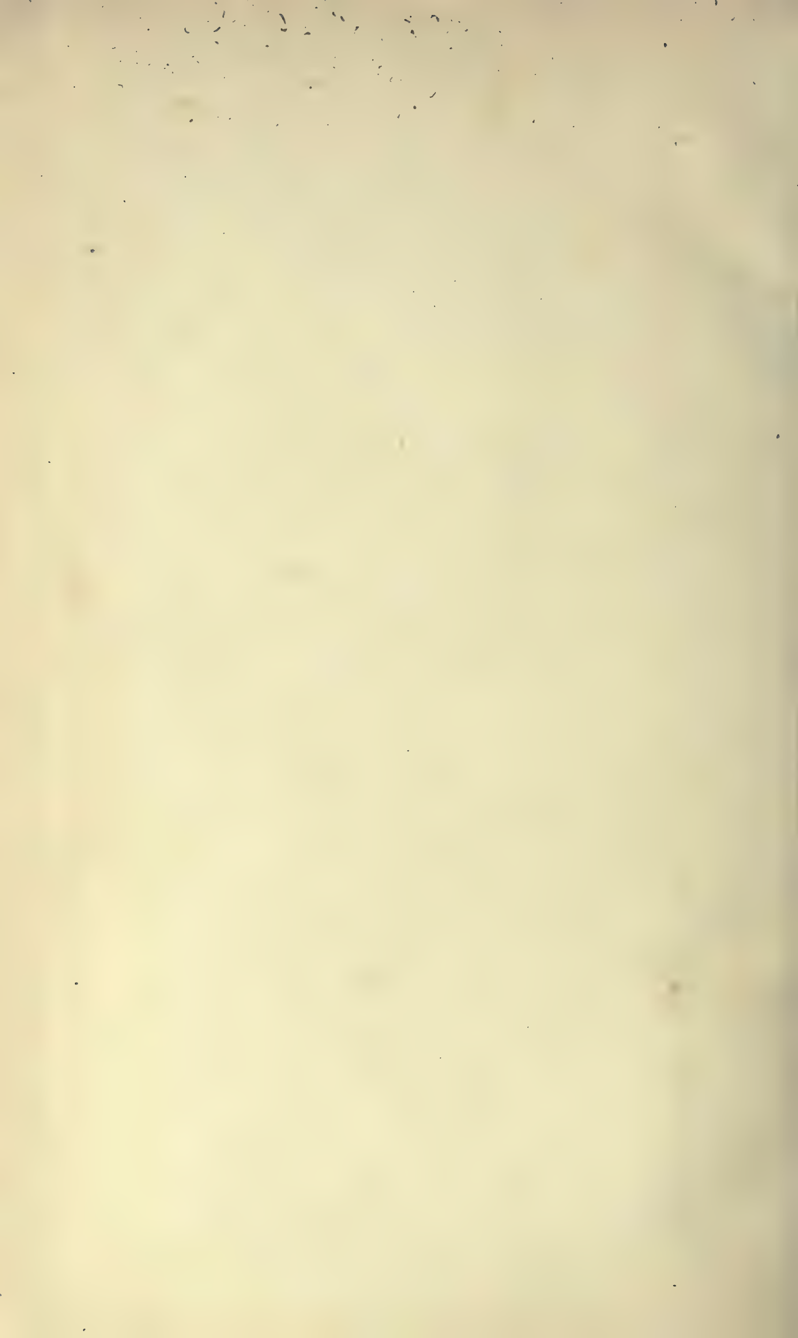

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